

Research Division Report #42

AGE AND ARTS PARTICIPATION:

1982-1997


Richard A. Peterson, Pamela C. Hull, and Roger M. Kern



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

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Seven Locks Press
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Pamela C. Hull
Roger M. Kern

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On February 12, 1996 an article titled “As Patrons Age, Future of Arts is Uncertain” appeared in the *New York Times* (Miller 1996). It galvanised attention on the question of the aging of arts audiences in the United States. The findings of the National Endowment for the Arts Research Division Report #34, *Age and Arts Participation*, released that same year, largely supported this assertion and helped to energize the debate over the aging of arts audiences. While many interested in arts policy echoed the fears of aging, the findings were hotly contested by some arts presenters who said that they did not perceive their audiences as aging.

To bring further light to these issues, the National Endowment for the Arts commissioned Demographic Data Consultants of Nashville to revisit the issue of the age of arts audiences with the newly available data from the 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts. Since Research Division Report #34 had made particular note of the low rates of arts participation of the baby boom generation (those in the United States born between 1946 and 1965), the Endowment asked Demographic Data Consultants to pay particularly close attention to the arts participation of baby boomers.

This executive summary highlights the prime findings of that study. It is divided into five parts, each highlighting the key findings of the corresponding chapter in the full report.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 sets the scene for the monograph by taking a first look at the age of the audiences for the seven benchmark performing art forms in 1982, 1992, and 1997. Since the average age of the United States population has been increasing over this span of years, the age of the arts audience for each of the seven benchmark art forms is compared with the age of the sample as a whole in each year. The evidence for the three following conclusions can be found in Table 1.1.

- The audiences for all art forms, except opera, are aging faster than did the entire sample.
- In 1982 only the opera audience was older than the entire sample. By 1997 the audiences for all art forms were older than the sample except for jazz, and museum-goers have the same average age as the entire sample.
- The jazz audience is aging most rapidly. In 1982 it was eleven years younger than that of the whole sample, by 1997 it was just two years younger.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2 we ask what distribution of young and older people we “see” if we look out over the average audience for each benchmark art form in 1982, in 1992, and again in 1997? Is there indeed, a higher proportion of the audience with graying hair, or are the larger numbers of young people born since World War II taking the places of their elders in arts audiences over the span of years from 1982 to 1997? The answer depends on which of the seven art forms one is talking about, so each will be discussed separately. The data from which the following conclusions are drawn are from Tables 2.1 through 2.7.

- The classical music audience is aging faster than the population as a whole. In 1982 those under thirty years of age comprised 26.9 percent of the audience and by 1997 comprised just 13.2 percent of the audience. Over this same span of years, those over sixty years of age rose from 15.6 percent to 30.3 percent of the classical music audience.
- By 1997, a higher proportion of the classical music audience was over sixty than was the audience for any other performing art form.
- In 1982 those under thirty years of age comprised just 17.8 percent of the opera audience and by 1997 comprised only 13.3 percent of the audience for opera. Over this same span of years, audience members over sixty rose from 16.6 percent to 23.5 percent of the opera audience.

- While the opera audience was the oldest in 1982 and aged somewhat through the years to 1997, it was the one art form whose audience aged less rapidly than did the population as a whole.
- The dynamics of the Broadway musical theater audience aging is similar to that seen above but not as dramatically as for classical music. In 1982, those under thirty years of age comprised 27.1 percent of the audience and by 1997 comprised just 16.2 percent of the audience. Over this same span of years, those over sixty rose from 16.4 percent to 22.7 percent of the musical theater audience.
- In 1982 the jazz audience was unusually young in that just 5.0 percent of the 1982 jazz audience was over sixty, while for all the other benchmark arts, between 15 percent and 17 percent of the audiences was above sixty years of age.
- In 1982 fully 56.7 percent of the jazz audience was under thirty years of age, but by 1997 these younger age groups had fallen dramatically to 23.2 percent of the jazz audience. Over the same span of years those over sixty rose from 5.0 percent to 15.5 percent of the jazz audience.
- In 1982 those under thirty years of age comprised 29.1 percent of the theater audience, and by 1997 young people comprised just 16.7 percent of the audience for theater. Over this same span of years, those over sixty rose from 15.5 percent to 22.8 percent of the theater audience.
- In 1982 34.1 percent of the ballet audience was younger than thirty years of age; this was the second highest proportion after jazz. By 1997 the proportion of the ballet audience who were under thirty dropped to 16.1 percent, a level comparable to the other performing arts. Those sixty and over comprised 15.4 percent of the ballet audience in 1982, and by 1997 had risen to 22.0 percent, a change comparable with the that taking place for arts audiences generally.
- In 1982 30.6 percent of arts museum attendances were by young people, and by 1997 just 19.2 percent. This change is comparable with that of the other art forms, but by 1997 art museums attracted the second highest proportion of attendances by people under thirty (after jazz).
- Unlike all of the other benchmark arts, the proportion of museum-goers sixty and over has not increased appreciably over the fifteen years from 1982 to 1997. Later evidence introduced suggests the reason that not as many older people frequent art museums is their impaired ability to walk and stand for extended periods of time.

Not all arts attendees attend with equal frequency. Observers have suggested that older attendees are likely to buy season tickets while attendees under thirty buy tickets event-by-event as time, money, and inclination dictate and thus generally attend less frequently. The information presented in Tables 2.8 through 2.14 show a somewhat more complex pattern:

- For **opera**, the predicted pattern held true in 1982 and 1997 with young attendees attending somewhat less often than older attendees.
- For **classical music**, **theater**, and **ballet**, the pattern was the opposite in 1982 from what was expected. That is, young attendees attended more often than older attendees. For all three forms, however, young attendees attended less often than older attendees by 1997.
- In the case of **jazz** where season tickets are seldom offered, attendees in their twenties attended more often than did both teenage attendees and those sixty and above.
- Looking at all the art forms together (as seen in Table 2.15), we find that arts attendees in their twenties get quite involved in the art forms of their choice and attend often, while attendees in their thirties and forties do not go as often, perhaps because of the competing demands of family and work. Finally, in their later years, attendees come back to attending more often.

Chapter 3

In Chapter 3 we follow respondents who are in the same birth cohort across the survey years from 1982 to 1997. Two distinct predictions have been made about the observed lower level of arts participation of baby boomers relative to their elders. One expectation is that they will “age into” arts participation as they embrace midlife obligations and perspectives. The alternative prediction is that the lower level of arts participation is a consequence of their early liberal experience and will persist over the coming decades, while post-boomer cohorts, raised in a more conservative atmosphere, will enjoy levels of arts participation comparable to pre-boomers.

In 1982, baby boomer respondents were eighteen to thirty-six years of age, so it was impossible to know what their mid-life experience would be. Now, fifteen years later, is the appropriate moment to test these assertions. By 1997 post-boomers comprised 21.5 percent, boomers 43.0 percent, and pre-boomers 35.5 percent of survey respondents.

The question asked in Chapter 3 is the same as the one asked in Chapter 2, namely, what distribution of ages would be seen if you looked out at the typical audience of each specific art form in 1982, in 1992, and again in 1997. The difference is that here we ask what cohorts, rather than age groups would predominate. The following points highlight the findings shown in Tables 3.1 through 3.7. Starting with the youngest, cohorts are considered in turn.

- **Post-boomer cohort 1976-1980:** It is encouraging for future arts participation that this youngest group in 1997 attended five of the seven benchmark arts somewhat more often than the sample as a whole, and they were under-represented in the audience of only one art form, opera.
- **Post-boomer cohort 1966-1975:** This young cohort attended six of the seven art forms less often than the sample as a whole, but their under-representation was less pronounced in 1997 than in 1992 for three forms, opera, musicals, and art museums.
- **Late-baby boomers 1956-1965:** Except for jazz, which more often appeals to the young, late-boomers are clearly under-represented in arts audiences.
- **Early-baby boomers 1946-1955:** In marked contrast to late-boomers, early boomers, contrary to all expectations, were over-represented in the audiences of six of seven forms in 1982 and in 1997 as well. This starkly contradicts the finding of Research Report #34. The reason for the difference is that in that analysis the authors took into account the participation rates that the various cohorts should have attained given their education and income. Given the boomer cohort's better education and higher income relative to prior cohorts, their arts attendance was markedly less than would be expected. Considering together the findings of these two studies, demonstrates that early boomers attended the arts more often than earlier cohorts but not nearly so often as would be expected given their educational and financial advantages.
- Neither early- nor late-boomers are attending the arts more often as they age, bringing into question the assumption that the boomer and later cohorts will age into arts participation.
- **War and Great Depression cohorts 1926-1945:** Members of these cohorts attend most art forms more often than the sample as a whole with the exception of jazz.
- **Roaring 20s cohort 1916-1925:** Members of this cohort were at least seventy-two in 1997, so it is not surprising that their arts attendance was lower than for respondents as a whole in five of the seven art forms. The

only two forms in which they were somewhat over-represented in 1997 were classical music and opera.

- **Pre-World War I cohort born before 1916:** The youngest of this group were sixty-seven in 1982 and eighty-two in 1997, so their under-representation in audiences for all the art forms is not surprising. Attendance does not go down gradually with advancing age, instead, it plummets as one approaches seventy years of age.

In a fashion parallel to Chapter 2 where the focus was on age groups, the next question is whether arts attendees of each of the cohorts attend more frequently than would be expected by comparing their attendance rates with the average rate of attendance of the entire sample. Because the findings suggest such groupings, we will focus on three groups of adjacent cohorts: baby boomers, those born before the baby boomers (pre-boomers), and those born since the baby boomers (post-boomers). The conclusions drawn here are based on data in Tables 3.8 through 3.14.

- Among post-boomers, it was only for jazz that a few respondents account for the cohorts' attendance. For all the rest of the art forms, a larger number of Generation X attendees attended fewer times on average. This means a large number of people were sampling widely.
- For baby boomers generally, a large number of attendees attend infrequently and this trend grew more pronounced from 1982 to 1997. That means that these boomers, like the post-boomers noted above, tend to sample widely without showing a strong commitment to any arts form.
- In marked contrast, the attendance figures for pre-boomers are accounted for largely by the frequent attendance of a relatively few people in these cohorts.

Chapter 4

What is the importance of age relative to other factors in determining arts attendance? This is the question addressed in Chapter 4. Ordinary Least Squares regression analysis was used to look at the effects of age while controlling for the effects of a number of other measured variables for each of the seven benchmark arts. Also used, was a summary measure of the attendance at all the arts together.

It was important to control for the effects of the other factors because the direct relationship between age and arts attendance was inconsistent and weak. This was not unexpected because it is well known that arts participation tends

to rise gradually from the thirties through the sixties and then falls rapidly after that age. However, with the controls in place, the results became clear and strong as can be seen in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. These results suggest that it is not age per se but the many factors often associated with stages in the life-cycle that influence arts participation.

- There is a significant positive relationship between age and arts attendance for each of the art forms except jazz when the effects of the control factors are taken into account. This result is even stronger when considering the summary measure of arts attendance. This means that older persons attend all the art forms except jazz more often than do younger people of the same education, gender, marital status, income, etc.
- Education is, in every instance, the best predictor of participation in each art form separately and also when they are combined together in the summary measure.
- Age is the second best predictor of arts attendance in four of the benchmark forms, and it is a significant predictor in every case but jazz.
- Age is the fourth most important predictor of the summary arts participation measure after education, income, and gender.
- The importance of the other control variables varies from art form to art form in interesting ways. Since these findings are not directly relevant to the contribution of age to arts participation, the reader is referred to the text and tables to see their place in the mix of arts predictors.

Chapter 5

To what extent do the same factors determine arts participation for persons of differing ages? A number of potential differences come to mind. For example, respondents in their thirties are more likely to have their arts participation reduced due to the presence of young children in the home. At the same time, chronic ill health is likely to be a factor for more older people than for those who are young. To assess the importance of influences during major phases of the life-cycle. As in Chapter 4, the sample was split the into three parts: baby boomers, pre-boomers, and post-boomers.

The same sort of analysis was performed as in Chapter 4 with one small variation, post-boomers under the age of 25 were asked whether they were full-time students at the time they were surveyed. This variable is included for the post-boomer regression analyses. The results of the OLS regression analyses for each of the three age-groups on the seven benchmark arts are shown in Tables 5.1 through

5.7. For a succinct summary of the findings for each art form please refer to the text of Chapter 5. The most significant general findings are as follows:

- The set of variables taken together proved to be better predictors of pre-boomers' arts participation than that of boomers or post-boomers. The set of predictors of participation for those born during World War II or before, including education, gender, and income, are not as important for younger cohorts. The findings of Research Report #34 suggest that this is due to the differences between the cohorts and is not simply a function of the age of the respondents. Thus those interested in increasing the arts participation of younger people will do well to look to factors other than those measured here.
- Even after dividing the sample into three parts based on age, being older is a significant determinant of arts participation among pre-boomers or boomers for five of the seven benchmark arts. The finding for pre-boomers is surprising because, within that older group of respondents, age is negatively correlated with arts participation. The finding of the regression analyses mean that age is not, in itself, a deterrent to arts participation. Rather, age is often associated with other causal factors such as health, education, and income, which do correlate with arts participation.
- In twenty of twenty-one regression models, education is the best single predictor of participation in each of the arts. The single exception is ballet for pre-boomers, where income, father's education, and being female are the best predictors of attendance.

As in Chapter 4, a summary measure of arts participation was also created. The respondent was given one point for each art form they had attended in the prior year. Thus, since there are seven art forms, the variable ranges from 0 to 7. The results for this summary measure of arts participation are shown in Table 5.8

- Even though the sample was divided into three parts on the basis of age, age is still positively and significantly associated with arts attendance for baby boomers and pre-boomers.
- The respondents' education was far and away the best predictor of arts participation for all three age groups. The importance of education is further underlined by the fact that the respondents father's education is significantly associated with participation even for the pre-boomers who

were at least in their mid-fifties at the time of the survey. Further underlining the importance of education, the second most important predictor of arts participation among post-boomers was being a full-time student.

- **Family income** is the second most important predictor for boomers and pre-boomers, and sixth most important for post-boomers.
- **Being female** is the third most important predictor of the summary arts measure for baby boomers and for pre-boomers, but gender hardly seems salient for post-boomers.
- **Chronic health problems** is the fourth best predictor for the pre-boomers where we expected it to be most salient, but it is also the sixth best predictor for boomers. As expected, health is not significantly related to arts participation for post-boomers.
- Finally, **not being currently married**, as expected, is significantly related to arts participation but only for baby boomers and post-boomers.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION: THE "AGING ARTS AUDIENCE" QUESTION

Concern over the aging of performing and visual arts audiences in the United States and elsewhere has been mounting over the past several decades. The question was directly confronted in the 1996 National Endowment for the Arts, Research Division Report #34 (hereafter referred to as Research Report #34). In brief, the report found that in the decade from 1982 to 1992 there was clear evidence of an aging audience in several of the performing arts disciplines, most notably classical music and opera. This aging was due, the study found, largely to the fact that "baby boomers" (people born between 1946 and 1965) did not attend as often as would be expected from the participation rates of those born earlier.

The report evoked considerable comment and some criticism. Performing arts professionals called for renewed efforts to attract younger people, and others promoters questioned the findings, saying they did not see such a trend in their own venues. At the same time, museum managers pointed with satisfaction to the finding that museum audiences were not aging.

The recently completed National Endowment for the Arts 1997 Survey of Public Participation in the Arts (hereafter SPPA) provides a good opportunity to revisit the aging audience question and to take a fresh look at the question. For the most part, therefore, we do not make the same kinds of analyses contained in Research Report #37. There are three reasons for taking a different tack. First, the 1997 survey was fielded just five years after the prior one, so changes in the fundamental relationships reported in Research Report #37 cannot be great.

The second reason is to give those interested in arts audiences a more intuitively clear way of seeing the aging question. Many practitioners in the arts world considered the complex multi-variant analyses reported in Part I, authored by Richard Peterson and Darren Sherkat, to be incomprehensible, while they found Part II, authored by Judy Balfe and Rolf Meyersohn too cluttered with tables relating age of arts participants to other variables such as gender or education. Thus, though many commentators accepted the conclusion that the performing arts audience is aging, practitioners found it difficult to really understand the information they needed and to apply the findings directly to their own situations.

The third reason why different methods are used here is that the 1997 arts participation figures cannot be directly compared with those reported in the prior surveys. This is because the methods of drawing the sample, choosing respondents, and administering the questionnaire were all markedly different. For a detailed discussion of the differences see (NEA 1998a, 1998b). In consequence, the absolute levels of arts participation in 1997 cannot be directly compared with those in

earlier years. The numerous comparisons we do make across years all compare the proportion of the audience of a given age in one survey year with the proportion in another survey year. Thus, to take one example from Table 1.1, which can be found following the text of this chapter, the average age of the opera attendees was 43.5 years in 1982 and 45 in 1997, an increase of one and one half years. Over the same span of years, the average age of all SPPA respondents — like that of the population of the United States — increased three years, thus, while the opera audience aged, it did so only one half as fast as did the respondent sample as a whole. Because the 1997 sample is not directly comparable with the other years, Chapters 4 and 5 focus entirely on the data from 1997.

In this and subsequent chapters we will use both the word “attendance” and the word “attendee.” Attendee refers to the individuals in the SPPA sample who report participating in a particular arts activity at least once during the prior year. Attendance refers to the aggregate of the participation of attendees in the particular arts activity. Thus, a person who reports going to four classical music concerts in the prior year is counted as an attendee and contributes four units to the aggregate attendance at classical music concerts for the year.

CHAPTER TOPICS

Chapter 2: The Changing Age of Arts Audiences. Chapter 2 shows the age distribution of the national audience for each of the benchmark art forms. Thus, for the first time we will be able to see clearly the proportions of young, middle-aged, and older people in the national audience for each art form in 1982, 1992 and in 1997. This kind of analysis makes any changes in the age of the audience for the arts easier to see and to understand. In addition, focusing on the proportion of the audience who are less than 20, 20–29, 30–39, etc. in each survey year circumvents the problem, mentioned above, that the rates of reported participation vary widely from survey year to year.

After first focusing on the age composition of arts attendance, the focus then shifts to look at the age distribution of arts attendees. If young, mid-life, and older attendees, on average, attend an art form the same number of times during a year, the figures for “attendance” and “attendee” will be the same. If, however, as some commentators assert, younger attendees sample a wide range of activities, attending any one art form less often than older participants who are more likely to buy season tickets, then more young people and less older people will account for the aggregate attendance.

Chapter 3: The Contribution of the Baby Boomers to Arts Audiences. One of the prime concerns addressed in Research Report #34 was what seemed to be the

lower arts participation of the baby boom birth cohort relative to their elders. A birth cohort includes all those born in the same span of years, and the baby boom cohort includes all those born between 1946 and 1965. Unlike an age group whose members change every year, the members of a birth cohort always remain the same as they age together year-by-year. Chapter 3 tracks the arts participation of the baby boom, younger, and older cohorts as they age from 1982 to 1997. As in Chapter 2 the national arts audiences for the seven benchmark arts is shown, but here birth cohorts are focal, and the central question is, *Do baby boomers form an ever larger part of the arts audience as they mature?* In a way parallel to Chapter 2, the focus is first on the cohort composition of the aggregate audience attendance and then on the cohort composition of attendees.

Chapter 4: Age and Other Factors in Determining Arts Participation. As Research Report #34 clearly showed, numerous other factors, such as gender, education, income, health, combine with age in determining arts participation. To more clearly distinguish the influence of age per se relative to the other factors, regression analyses of participation are performed for each of the seven benchmark arts. The focus is exclusively on the 1997 data to alleviate the incomparability problem discussed above. The first section of Chapter 4 shows the influence of age on participation relative to each of the other controlled factors. The final section of Chapter 4 looks at the contribution of each of the control variables to predicting arts participation.

Chapter 5: Factors Differentially Affecting Baby Boomers, Pre-Boomers, and Post-Boomers Arts Participation. Different factors influence arts participation over the life course. Divorce or death of a spouse is not often a problem for the young, and children in the home is not often a problem for those past mid-life, for example. To show the differential influence of the control factors for baby boomers in comparison with pre- and post-boomers, regression analyses of participation are performed showing the independent influence of age on participation, net of the controlled factors. The focus here again is on the 1997 data to alleviate the incomparability problem discussed above.

FIRST LOOK AT ARTS AUDIENCES

The Median Age of Arts Attendees

While most of this monograph looks at age groups and birth cohorts, it is useful to begin inspecting the data by looking at the median age¹ of the audience for each of the benchmark arts in the survey years 1982, 1992, and 1997. In effect, a survey of the audiences at classical music concerts, ballet performances, opera, etc. in 1982, 1992, and 1997 to see if they have aged over this period of time.

The average age of the United States population has been increasing, so the key question is whether the audience for each of the art forms is rising slower or faster than is the population as a whole. The top line of Table 1.1 shows that the median age of the survey respondent was 40 in 1982, 42 in 1992, and 43 in 1997.² These changes mean that, like the United States population as a whole, the average age of survey respondents was rising one year in every five years between 1982 and 1997.

Table 1.1.
Median Age of Attenders, Overall Sample and Benchmark Arts*

	1982	1992	1997	Net Gain
Overall Sample	40	42	43	3
Opera	43.5 (+3.5)	45 (+3)	45 (+2)	1.5
Classical	40 (0)	45 (+3)	46 (+3)	6
Musical	39 (-1)	43 (+1)	44 (+1)	5
Theater	39 (-1)	44 (+2)	44 (+1)	5
Ballet	37 (-3)	40 (-2)	44 (+1)	7
Museum	36 (-4)	40 (-2)	43 (0)	7
Jazz	29 (-11)	37 (-5)	41 (-2)	12

*Values in parentheses indicate years of difference from median age

These three median ages, 40 in 1982, 42 in 1992, and 43 in 1997, can be used as the “expected” age of arts attendees for the three survey years. These ages would be found if persons of all ages had attended the same amount. Any departure from these expected figures signals that the audience for a benchmark art form is older or younger than expected in the particular survey year. To be able to see these differences at a glance, departures from the expected age are noted in parenthesis in Table 1.1.

Taking a more detailed look at table 1.1, we can see the changing age of arts audience in several ways.³ Looking at the column for 1982 we find that jazz, with an audience averaging 29 years old, had by far the youngest of any of the bench-

mark arts. Opera at 43.5 years had the oldest audience, and the audiences of the other five forms were at or below the average age of the sample as a whole.

The 1997 column shows quite a different picture. While the sample as a whole has aged three years, the audience for jazz has aged twelve years, nearly reaching the age of the sample as a whole. What is more, the age of the audiences for all of the other benchmark arts in 1997 is at, or above, the age of the sample as a whole. Comparing the differences between the left-hand column for 1982 with the right-hand column for 1997 shown in the “Net Gain” column at the right, we find that, except for opera, the average age of audience members in all the arts has risen faster than that for the sample as a whole, and that after jazz, this relative rise has been greatest for the ballet, art museum, and classical music audiences.

Expected Age and Cohort Distributions

Just as it is possible to form an “expected” average age of arts participants, it is possible to find the “expected” proportion of participants in each age group and cohort during each of the three survey years. Thus, if each age group and cohort contain the same proportion of attendees as all of the others in the survey year we will find the proportions shown in Table 1.2. For example in 1982 we expect 20.6 percent of arts audiences to be in their thirties and in 1997 we expect 22.9 percent of arts audiences in their thirties.

Linking these expected figures to those observed in the survey samples will be focal in Chapters 2 and 3, but the expected distributions should be inspected before moving to those chapters. Looking first at the upper half of Table 1.2, note the clear decline of those between eighteen and twenty-nine, seen by comparing the 1997 column with that for 1982 and the corresponding rise of those in their forties. The decline in the youth and increase in mid-lifers reflect the aging of the large baby boom cohort over this fifteen-year period.⁴

Chapter 3 focuses on the changing contribution of Baby Boomers (respondents born in the twenty years between 1946 and 1965), to the arts audiences over the years from 1982 to 1997, and it compares these figures with the proportions that would be expected if members of every cohort, on average, attended equally. These expected frequencies are shown in the bottom half of Table 1.2. Over these fifteen years boomers have comprised just over 40 percent of SPPA respondents. In 1982, post-boomers were not old enough to be surveyed, but by 1997 they comprised 21.5 percent of the survey sample and pre-boomers ranks shrank proportionately over the same time period.

Table 1.2.
Expected Age Group and Cohort Distributions*
Age Group Distribution of Samples (%)

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	4.8	3.0	2.1
20-29	24.0	18.2	15.8
30-39	20.6	23.0	22.9
40-49	14.9	18.5	21.6
50-59	14.4	13.1	14.6
60-69	11.6	11.8	10.7
70 & over	9.6	12.4	12.4
Total	99.9	100.0	100.1

Cohort Distribution of Samples (%)			
	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			4.6
1966-1975		15.2	17.4
1956-1965	22.1	22.5	23.5
1946-1955	21.8	20.3	20.7
1936-1945	16.0	14.3	12.9
1926-1935	14.5	12.0	10.6
1916-1925	12.9	10.0	7.7
Before 1916	12.7	5.6	2.6
Total	100.0	99.9	100.0

*Some column percentages do not total to 100.0 due to rounding.

CHAPTER 2: THE CHANGING AGE OF THE ARTS AUDIENCE

In Chapter 1 it was observed that the average age of the audience for each of the benchmark arts has increased between 1982 and 1997. Here in Chapter 2 this observation is examined in greater detail by dividing the total sample into age groups of ten years in length—twenty year-olds, thirty year-olds, etc. We focus on the changes for each ten-year-long age group. In the first section the proportion of the total audience represented by each of the age groups is discussed, that is to say “attendance” as the word is defined in the 1997 *Survey of Public Participation in the Arts*. In this analysis, the total number of attendances reported by survey respondents is tallied, and the degree to which this representation is greater or less than would be expected by chance is observed. In the second section of Chapter 2, the focus is on attendees to see the degree to which a few respondents account for the aggregate audience for the year by attending the arts many times and whether the average number of attendees varies by age and art form. Only those relationships that are statistically significant are discussed in the text.

PART I ATTENDANCE

The concept of attendance used here represents what one is likely to see looking out over the audience in each of the arts and observing what percent of the audience is in their twenties, thirties, etc. This look is taken for the survey years 1982, 1992, and 1997. This seems such a simple way of asking about aging of the audience; it is a wonder that it has not been focal in earlier survey reports. The reason is that prior reports have asked other questions of the data.⁵ What is more, though conceptually simple, answering this question involves a great deal of manual calculation.¹⁰ To get this value we first ran cross-tab frequencies of age group or birth cohort by the number of attendances, to learn how many respondents in each age group or cohort attended each art form every number of times. For example, in the 20–29 age group in 1997, 95 respondents attended jazz one time, 75 attended two times, 48 attended three times, etc., up to the maximum possible value of 72 times in one year. Next, each value in the frequency cell was multiplied by the corresponding number of attendances for each age group. (In the same example, 95 times 1, 75 times 2, 48 times 3, etc.) Then these products were summed for each age group or cohort to represent the total number of times that respondents in this age group or cohort attended that benchmark art in the previous year. (For example, the 20–29 year old respondents attended jazz a total of

1,084 times in 1997.) Finally, the sum for each age group or cohort was divided by the summed total of every age group or cohort's attendances, that is, the total number of attendances by all respondents in that year, to reflect the proportion of attendances reported by each age group or cohort in relation to the others in each sample year. (For example, the total for the 20–29 age group of 1,084 was divided by the grand total of 5,123 attendances for the whole sample in 1997 to reflect the 21 percent share of total jazz attendances for this age group.)

Looking at the age group composition of arts audiences, recall that, as found in Chapter 1, the survey population has aged somewhat from 1982 to 1997. To take this aging of the population into account, the calculated percentage for each age group with the expected percentages discussed in Chapter 1 and shown in Table 1.2 will be compared. In each of the tables displayed in Chapter 2, there is a number in parenthesis below each percentage. This represents the difference (plus or minus) between the observed percentage and what would be expected if people of all age groups attended the art venue with equal frequency.

Here and throughout the monograph, the art forms will be discussed in the following order: classical music, opera, musical theater, jazz, theater, ballet, and art museum attendance. The tables are also presented in this same order.

The Classical Music Audience

Table 2.1 shows the age distribution of the audience attending classical music concerts in 1982, 1992, and 1997. Looking across the second and third row of figures, the proportion of the audience in their twenties and thirties has gone down dramatically over this fifteen year period, from 21.5 percent to 11.4 percent and from 24.5 percent to 13.7 percent respectively.⁷ Over the same years the proportion of respondents sixty years of age and older has nearly doubled, going from 15.6 percent to 30.3 percent.⁸

As noted above, the population as a whole has aged over this same period, but an inspection of the Table 2.1 figures in parentheses shows that the audience for classical music has aged faster than has the entire sample of respondents. The negative sign for those in their twenties shows that their attendance has always been significantly below what is expected, and this difference has increased between 1982 and the two 1990s surveys. In addition, those in their thirties, whose attendance in 1982 was 3.9 percent above what would be expected, had become 9.2 percent below what would be expected by 1997. The picture is reversed at the other end of the age spectrum. In 1982, those over sixty were under represented, but by 1997 the two oldest age groups attended classical music concerts more than would be expected, given their proportions in the sample population. Taken

Table 2.1.
Age Group % Contribution to Total
Classical Music Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	5.4 (+0.6)**	1.2 (-1.8)**	1.8 (-0.3)
20-29	21.5 (-2.5)**	12.9 (-5.3)**	11.4 (-4.4)**
30-39	24.5 (+3.9)**	18.6 (-4.4)**	13.7 (-9.2)**
40-49	17.7 (+2.8)**	21.4 (+2.9)**	23.3 (+1.7)**
50-59	15.4 (+1.0)**	16.9 (+3.8)**	19.5 (+4.9)**
60-69	8.5 (-3.1)**	15.5 (+3.7)**	14.5 (+3.8)**
70 & over	7.1 (-2.5)**	13.4 (+1.0)*	15.8 (+3.4)**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Values in parentheses indicate the difference of this observed percentage from the “expected” percentage of a group in a total sample. These differences are statistically significant where indicated (*p<.05; **p<.01). A statistically significant difference means that the probability of this difference occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for p<.05) or less than 1% (for p<.01), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this difference actually exists.

together, these findings show that the classical music audience is aging, and is aging more rapidly than is the population as a whole.

The Opera Audience

A number of commentators have suggested that more young people have been going to opera performances in the 1990s than were in the 1980s. The age distribution of the audience attending opera performances in 1982, 1992, and 1997 are shown in Table 2.2. Indeed, eighteen and nineteen year-olds composed one percent of the audiences in 1982 and 1.6 percent in 1997. Though this increase is small, the numbers in parenthesis are encouraging because in 1997 teens more nearly approximate the expected contribution to the total audience for opera. Those in their twenties show a different pattern. Their percent of the audience has fallen from 16.8 to 11.7, but the differences from their expected attendance has narrowed from -7.2 to -4.1.

Table 2.2.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Opera Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	1.0 (-3.8)**	1.2 (-1.8)**	1.6 (-0.5)
20-29	16.8 (-7.2)**	11.1 (-7.1)**	11.7 (-4.1)**
30-39	22.4 (+1.8)*	20.3 (-2.7)	17.2 (-5.7)**
40-49	22.9 (+8.0)**	23.1 (+4.6)**	27.5 (+5.9)**
50-59	20.2 (+5.8)**	18.7 (+5.6)**	18.4 (+3.8)**
60-69	5.9 (-5.7)**	17.1 (+5.3)**	11.7 (+1.0)
70 & over	10.7 (+1.1)	8.6 (-3.8)**	11.8 (-0.6)
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

The proportion of those in their thirties has declined steadily, and their participation relative to the expected has moved from slightly positive (+1.8) to quite negative (-5.7). Those in their forties have risen from 22.9 percent of the audience to 27.5 percent, while the proportion in their fifties has remained nearly the same. The proportion of the audience in their sixties and above has risen from 16.6 to 23.5 percent, and they have moved from being less represented in the audience than would be expected (-4.4), to being a bit more than expected (+.4). Taken together these figures suggest that the opera audience is older than that of the population, but it is not aging more rapidly than the sample as a whole.

The Audience Attending Musicals

The figures for the average age of the musical theater audience in Table 1.1 showed that, on average the audience for musicals is about the same as the total sample and it has been aging at about the same rate as the total. The figures for the musical theater audience by age group can be found in Table 2.3. They show that both younger and older people are under represented. Unlike both classical music and opera, the audience for musical theater is composed primarily of those from 30 to 59 years of age.

Table 2.3.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Musical Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	4.6 (-0.2)	2.1 (-0.9)**	2.1 (+0.0)
20-29	22.5 (-1.5)**	14.2 (-4.0)**	14.1 (-1.7)**
30-39	23.3 (+2.7)**	22.0 (-1.0)	21.1 (-1.8)**
40-49	16.6 (+1.7)**	21.8 (+3.3)**	22.8 (+1.2)*
50-59	16.6 (+2.2)**	15.7 (+2.6)**	17.1 (+2.5)**
60-69	10.3 (-1.3)**	13.8 (+2.0)**	12.1 (+1.4)**
70 & over	6.1 (-3.5)**	10.5 (-1.9)**	10.6 (-1.8)**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

The Jazz Audience

The average age of the jazz audience is the youngest of all the benchmark arts, as seen in Table 1.1. At the same time, jazz has experienced the greatest degree of aging between 1982 and 1997. As Table 2.4 shows, in 1982 half of the audience was in their twenties (49.6 percent), and 57.7 percent were under thirty years of age. In 1997, however, barely one fifth (21.2 percent) were in their twenties and less than one quarter (23.2 percent) were under thirty. All of the groups aged forty and above have gained in their proportion of the jazz audience, but considering the figures in parenthesis, all age groups fifty and older are still under represented in the jazz audience, attesting to the fact that the audience for live jazz performances is still younger than in the other art forms.

The Theater Audience

As seen in Table 1.1 the average age of those in the theater audience increased five years, while the sample as a whole has aged three years between 1982 and 1997. This change, as seen in Table 2.5, is reflected across all the age groups. Those age groups less than forty have a lower percentage representation in the audience in 1997 than in 1982. Meanwhile, all those groups forty and older have increased their representation in the audience, even those over seventy years of age, who in 1997 represented 11.5 of the audience, just less than one percent below the expected percentage.

Table 2.4.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Jazz Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	7.1 (+2.3)**	1.7 (-1.3)**	2.0 (-0.1)
20-29	49.6 (+25.6)**	25.4 (+7.2)**	21.2 (+5.4)**
30-39	20.8 (+0.2)	33.2 (+10.2)**	23.8 (+0.9)
40-49	10.0 (-4.9)**	21.7 (+3.2)**	24.9 (+3.3)**
50-59	7.5 (-6.9)**	8.7 (-4.4)**	12.6 (-2.0)**
60-69	2.8 (-8.8)**	6.7 (-5.1)**	8.7 (-2.0)**
70 & over	2.2 (-7.4)**	2.6 (-9.8)**	6.8 (-5.6)**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

Table 2.5.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Theater Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	3.7 (-1.1)**	1.9 (-1.1)**	1.8 (-0.3)
20-29	25.4 (+1.4)**	13.7 (-4.5)**	14.9 (-0.9)
30-39	23.9 (+3.3)**	22.9 (-0.1)	19.6 (-3.3)**
40-49	17.9 (+3.0)**	21.7 (+3.2)**	23.8 (+2.2)**
50-59	13.7 (-0.7)	16.6 (+3.5)**	17.2 (+2.6)**
60-69	9.8 (-1.8)**	15.2 (+3.4)**	11.3 (+0.6)
70 & over	5.7 (-3.9)**	7.9 (-4.5)**	11.5 (-0.9)*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

The Ballet Audience

As seen in Table 1.1 the average age of the audience for ballet was thirty seven in 1982 and forty four in 1997, moving from three years younger than the entire sample to one year older between 1982 and 1997. And just as we have seen in looking at the theater audience, Table 2.6 shows that this aging has taken place across all age groups. Those below forty represented 60.7 percent of the ballet audience in 1982 and just 34.4 percent fifteen years later. At the same time, all age groups forty and older have increased their proportion of the ballet audience. Only those above seventy have not increased faster than would be expected from the aging of the sample as a whole.

Art Museum Attendance

As seen in Table 1.1, the audience for art works has aged faster than for any other art form except jazz. For the younger age groups particularly, as seen in Table 2.7, the pattern is like the audience for the other art forms. Respondents under forty accounted for 56.1 percent of art museum goers in 1982 but just 39.7 percent in 1997. Over the same period of years the proportion of respondents forty to fifty nine have increased the most, increasing from 28.5 percent to 43.6 percent of the museum audience. And, to a degree not seen for the other art forms, the museum audience sixty and older has increased only slightly from 15.4 percent to 16.7 percent, far less than expected when compared to from the aging of the total sample. Perhaps the physical activity involved in going through museum exhibits deterred and continues to deter the participation of older people in this art form.

Table 2.6.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Ballet Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	2.4 (-2.4)**	3.8 (+0.8)	2.0 (-0.1)
20-29	31.7 (+7.7)**	16.1 (-2.1)	14.1 (-1.7)
30-39	26.6 (+6.0)**	26.1 (+3.1)*	19.3 (-3.6)**
40-49	11.6 (-3.3)**	20.2 (+1.7)	27.1 (+5.5)**
50-59	12.4 (-2.0)**	10.4 (-2.7)**	15.5 (+0.9)
60-69	9.0 (-2.6)**	16.0 (+4.2)**	12.6 (+1.9)*
70 & over	6.4 (-3.2)**	7.5 (-4.9)**	9.4 (-3.0)**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

Table 2.7.
Age Group % Contribution to Total Art Museum Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
18-19	3.5 (-1.3)**	1.9 (-1.1)**	1.7 (-0.4)**
20-29	27.1 (+3.1)**	19.4 (+1.2)**	17.5 (+1.7)**
30-39	25.5 (+4.9)**	25.6 (+2.6)**	20.5 (-2.4)**
40-49	15.5 (+0.6)**	21.3 (+2.8)**	24.5 (+2.9)**
50-59	13.0 (-1.4)**	12.2 (-0.9)**	19.1 (+4.5)**
60-69	9.9 (-1.7)**	12.1 (+0.3)	9.3 (-1.4)**
70 & over	5.5 (-4.1)**	7.5 (-4.9)**	7.4 (-5.0)**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 2.1.

Part 2

ATTENDEES

Having looked at the age distribution of the arts audience as it has changed over time, attention now turns from the question of “attendances” to the question of “attendees.” The question is whether attendees of all ages, on average, attend the same number of times per year. This question is of importance because some commentators have observed that the older people who do attend, attend more often than young attendees do because, for example, they are more likely than younger people to buy season tickets. Thus, to draw one hypothetical example, it may be that fifty year old attendees are likely to attend five times each while those in their twenties, on average, attend twice. If this were the case, two fifty-year-olds would account for $(2 \times 5) = 10$ attendances, while it would take five twenty year olds to account for 10 attendances $(5 \times 2) = 10$.

To quickly show the degree to which a few attendees may account for the lion’s share of the attendance, the proportion of attendees of a given age group is compared with their contribution to the entire number of attendees. These comparisons for the age groups in each benchmark art form are shown in Tables 2.8 to 2.14. The figures in the tables are “difference scores”—that is the difference between an age group’s percentage of the total audience minus its percentage of all attendees. The (+) sign in the upper-left-most cell of Table 2.8, for example, means that in 1982 relatively few teens accounted for the attendance of this age group at classical music concerts, because they represented a larger percentage of attendances than of attendees. The (-) sign in the upper right-hand cell of the same table means that in 1997 those teens who attended classical music concerts did so less often than attendees in other age groups that year. The size of the numbers suggests the degree to which a few or many people of an age group contributed to the audience.⁹

The numerous no-zero differences scores shown in Tables 2.8 through 2.14 show that, indeed, attendees in different age groups do not all attend equally often. The pattern of plus and minus scores, however, is more complex than the relationship suggested above. Table 2.8 shows that, in 1982, younger attendees went to classical music concerts more often, while in 1997 older attendees went more often. Tables 2.12 and 2.13 show that this pattern is roughly the same for theater and ballet goers. Tables 2.9 and 2.10 show that opera and musicals attendees fit the pattern described above with younger attendees going less often while other attendees went more often all three survey years. The figures for jazz reported in Table 2.11 show that attendees in their twenties consistently attended more often than do those who are younger or older.

In order to get an impressionistic summary measure of these difference scores, the number of times attendees of a particular age attended more frequently than would be expected across all seven benchmark arts in 1982 and 1997 was examined. The results of these tabulations are found in Table 2.15. The figures suggest that attendees in their twenties attend often, while attendees in their thirties and forties tend to attend less often. Finally, the figures show that those attendees who are seventy years of age and older attend often as do those in their fifties and sixties in 1997.

Table 2.8.
Classical Music - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997	
Under 20	+1.0*	-0.5	-0.3	
20-29	+0.4	-1.4	-1.4	
30-39	+0.7	-2.4*	-3.5	**
40-49	-0.2	-1.5	-0.8	
50-59	-0.1	+0.5	+0.9	
60-69	-1.9**	+2.7**	+1.9	*
70 & over	+0.3	+2.4*	+3.2	**
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

These differences are statistically significant where indicated (*p<.05; **p<.01). A statistically significant difference means that the probability of this difference occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for p<.05) or less than 1% (for p<.01), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this difference actually exists.

Table 2.9.
Opera Music - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997	
Under 20	-2.2**	-0.9	-0.7	
20-29	-1.5	-2.1	-3.2*	
30-39	+3.3	-2.4	-2.1	
40-49	+2.9	+1.8	+2.4	
50-59	+1.7	+2.5	+0.6	
60-69	-6.4**	+2.7	+1.3	
70 & over	+2.1	-1.4	+1.6	
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.10.
Musical - Difference between % of Total Times Attended
and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
Under 20	+0.4	-0.3	-0.4
20-29	-0.2	-1.6	+0.0
30-39	-0.8	-1.6	-0.8
40-49	-0.8	+0.1	-0.9
50-59	+0.5	+0.3	+1.0
60-69	+0.2	+0.8	+0.7
70 & over	+0.6	+2.3**	+0.3

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.11.
Jazz - Difference between % of Total Times Attended
and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
Under 20	-2.0**	-0.8	-0.2
20-29	+7.7**	+2.0	+3.1**
30-39	-1.6	+2.9	-0.3
40-49	-1.6*	+1.0	-1.4
50-59	-2.1**	-2.1*	-2.2*
60-69	-1.1*	-2.3*	+0.2
70 & over	+0.5	-0.7	+0.9

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.12.
Theater - Difference between % of Total Times Attended
and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
Under 20	-0.5	-0.7	-0.9*
20-29	+3.0**	-2.6*	+0.6
30-39	-0.1	-0.0	-1.5
40-49	+0.4	+0.2	+0.0
50-59	-2.3**	+1.0	+0.9
60-69	-0.2	+2.7**	+0.5
70 & over	-0.2	-0.6	+0.4

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.13.
Ballet - Difference between % of Total Times Attended
and % of People Attending

	1982		1992
1997			
Under 20	-1.7*	+0.8	-0.4
20-29	+7.6**	-2.1	+1.3
30-39	-2.0	-1.4	-2.9
40-49	-4.4**	+1.2	+0.6
50-59	-0.1	-3.0	+0.3
60-69	-0.6	+4.3*	+1.5
70 & over	+1.3	+0.3	-0.3

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.14.
Art Museum - Difference between % of Total Times Attended
and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
Under 20	-1.0**	-0.7*	-0.8**
20-29	+0.2	-0.5	+1.1
30-39	+0.1	-0.8	-2.4**
40-49	-0.8	+0.4	+0.0
50-59	-0.7	-0.8	+3.4**
60-69	+1.2*	+1.7**	-0.4
70 & over	+0.9*	+0.8	-1.1*

See footnote on Table 2.8.

Table 2.15.
Sum of Seven Benchmark Arts with Attenders Attending more
Frequently than Expected (Possible Range 0-7)

	1992	1997
Under 20	2	0
20-29	5	4
30-39	3	0
40-49	2	2
50-59	2	6
60-69	2	6
70 & over	6	5

Taken together, these patterns suggest that attendees in their twenties get quite involved with one or more art forms, while attendees in their thirties and forties do not go as often, perhaps because of the competing demands of family and job. Furthermore, in their later years, attendees come back to attending more often. There will be a better chance to understand why the frequency of attendance varies by age in Chapter 5 where the predictors of arts attendance over the life-course are explored.

CHAPTER 3 THE CONTRIBUTION OF BABY BOOMERS TO THE ARTS AUDIENCE

Are baby boomers (those Americans born between 1946 through 1965) less likely than their elders to participate in the arts, as asserted in Research Report #34? The 1997 data make it possible to see whether boomers are “aging into” arts participation as some have predicted. In other words, if participation is due more to the respondent’s age than to their birth cohort, then the arts participation of baby boomers will increase for the next twenty years.

This chapter focuses on the arts participation of boomers and the other birth cohorts over the years from 1982 to 1997. Thus, while the changing age composition of each benchmark art’s audience from 1982 to 1997 was central in Chapter 2, here in Chapter 3 the focus is on the changing contribution of each birth cohort to the arts audience.

In 1982, baby boomers were eighteen to thirty-six years of age, the youngest respondents to that SPPA survey. By 1997, baby boomers had become fully established adults in the middle third of their lives, aged thirty-two to fifty one. In 1997, boomers comprised 44 percent of the SPPA survey respondents, while the post-boomers comprised 22 percent of respondents, and the pre-boomers comprised 34 percent of those surveyed.

As noted in Chapter 1, the term “birth cohort” or just “cohort” is the term used by social scientists to refer to all those born in the same span of years. Unlike an age group, say all 21 year olds, whose membership changes every year, the members of a birth cohort always remain the same as they age together year-by-year, decade-by-decade; thus once a baby boomer, always a boomer. It has been shown that the experience of “late boomers” (those born between 1956 and 1965) has been quite different from those of “early boomers” those born between 1946 and 1955 (Newman 1993). The early boomers grew up in the excitement of newfound prosperity, the exuberance of the counterculture and the feeling that their lives could make a difference in society. The late boomers grew up in the disillusioned backwash of many of these ideas. While early boomers tended to easily find jobs on the New Frontier or in the booming war plants, the late boomers entered a much more competitive job market with most of the best jobs already taken by the millions of early boomers. Since their formative experience was so different, we analyze the arts participation of early and late boomers separately in this chapter.

To keep this same level of detail through out the age range, all birth cohorts are defined as being those born in the ten years between the sixth year of a decade and

the fifth year of the next decade. The only exceptions to this rule are for the cohorts at the ends of the age range. Because of its rapid depletion, all those born in 1915 or before were lumped into one cohort. Those in this cohort were at least sixty-seven years of age in 1982, and by 1997 they were at least eighty-two years old. New cohorts have been added over the years, of course. In 1982 no cohort younger than the boomers were old enough to be surveyed, but by 1997 there were two new cohorts represented. Note however that this youngest 1997 cohort represents only those born over a five-year period, this because only those born between 1976 and 1980 were at least eighteen years of age and thus eligible to be respondents.

Chapter 3 tracks the arts participation of all the cohorts as they age from 1982 to 1997. As in Chapter 2 the national arts audiences for the seven benchmark arts is shown, but here birth cohorts are focal, and the central question is: *do baby boomers form a larger part of the arts audience relative to their proportion in the whole sample as they mature?* To get at this question the same approach is taken here as that in Chapter 2 where the focus was on age groups. Our goal here is to see what proportion of the arts audience comes from each of the birth cohorts. Again, as in Chapter 2, the question is whether these proportions are greater or less than would be expected if all cohorts had contributed equally to the audiences for the arts. The focus is shifted briefly from the composition of the audience to ask to what extent a few respondents tend to increase the cohort's contribution to the audience by attending many times, and whether the average number of attendances per attendee varies significantly by cohort.

Thus, the prime difference between Chapters 2 and 3 is that in the former we focused on the changing age of audiences in each of the art forms. Here in Chapter 3 the focus is on the arts attendance of each of the birth cohorts over the years from 1982 to 1997.

Part 1 Cohort Attendance Rates

Birth cohorts vary greatly in size, so, for example, there were far more baby boomers born in the United States than there were members of the two cohorts that follow them. Indeed, that is why these Generation Xers, as they are now called, have been referred to as the “baby bust” cohort. At the same time there are relatively few people in the cohorts born early in the 20th century because a considerable number of those born into them have already died. Given the unequal size of cohorts, the arts audience of each cohort relative to their proportion in the sample will be examined, so it is possible to see whether the contribution a cohort would be expected to make if each cohort contributed equally to the arts audience.¹⁰

Tables 3.1 through 3.7 present the contributions of each of the cohorts to one of the benchmark arts. In each table, the three upper left-hand cells are empty because persons in these cohorts were too young at the time to be surveyed. The figure in the upper right-hand cell of Table 3.1, for example, means that in 1997, 5.4 percent of the audience for classical music was from the youngest cohort sampled, those born between 1976 and 1980.¹¹ The numbers in parentheses in these same seven tables show the contribution of each cohort to the audience relative to the contribution it would make if all cohorts participated equally.¹² The figure of +0.8 in parenthesis in the upper right-hand cell of Table 3.1, for example, means that the 1976–1980 cohort contributes eight tenths of a percent more to the 1997 audience for classical music audience than expected.¹³ Now each cohort will be considered in turn.

Table 3.1.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Classical Music Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			5.4 (+0.8)**
1966-1975		10.1 (-5.1)**	9.6 (-7.8)**
1956-1965	20.3 (-1.8)**	17.5 (-5.0)**	15.9 (-7.6)**
1946-1955	23.4 (+1.6)**	19.5 (-0.8)	24.7 (+4.0)**
1936-1945	21.0 (+5.0)**	19.2 (+4.9)**	16.4 (+3.5)**
1926-1935	15.1 (+0.6)*	15.4 (+3.4)**	15.3 (+4.7)**
1916-1925	10.9 (-2.0)**	14.8 (+4.8)**	10.2 (+2.5)**
Before 1916	9.3 (-3.4)**	3.4 (-2.2)**	2.5 (-0.1)
	100.0	100.0	100.0

Values in parentheses indicate the difference of this observed percentage from the “expected” percentage of group in total sample. The differences are statistically significant where indicated (* p<.05; **p<.01). A statistically significant difference means that the probability of this difference occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for p<.05) or less than 1% (for p<.01), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this difference actually exists.

Post-Boomer Cohort 1976–1985 (–1980) Only in the 1997 survey were members of the 1976–1985 cohort old enough to be surveyed for the SPPA, and only those in the older half of the cohort years were at least eighteen years of age and thus eligible to take part in the SPPA survey. Very little can be said about their arts attendance. It is potentially encouraging for the future of the arts audience that these youngsters attend five of the seven benchmark arts more often than would be expected, and they under-attend only one art form, opera. It may be that their elevated rate of attendance is due in part to their participation in conjunction with school-related activities that give many of them easy access to arts performances. Certainly, such a decline is in line with the attendance of younger baby boomers whose attendance dropped from that of their youthful days in 1982 to 1997. However, it will be possible to discuss this possibility further in Chapter 5 where the focus is placed on the impact of school attendance on arts participation among post-boomers.

Post-Boomer Cohort 1966–1975 The trend in the arts participation of these early Generation Xers in the five years between 1992 and 1997 is very clear. They attend six of the seven benchmark arts less than expected in 1992 and in 1997 as well. What is more, their attendance, though still less than expected as shown by the negative signs, improved for opera, musicals, and theater attendance. Jazz is, as we have shown in Chapter 2, the one benchmark art that attracts more young people than those who are older. And it is the only art form that this cohort attended more than expected.

Later Baby boomers: 1956–1965 This cohort and all of the ones born earlier were surveyed in 1982 as well as in 1997, so for these cohorts all comparisons of cohort rates of participation will cover the full fifteen year time span.¹⁴

The arts participation of the later boomers, those born between 1956 and 1965 is well below their proportion in the sample as a whole. The only exception is jazz, the form that distinctively appeals to young people, and even the cohort's jazz attendance went down from 1982 to 1997. These late boomers were under represented in the audience of the other six art forms in 1982 and in 1997 as well. What is more, their under-representation increased from 1982 to 1997. The later boomers clearly show the low arts participation that has been widely observed in earlier studies, and they do not seem to be attending more as they mature into mid-life.

Table 3.2.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Opera Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			3.4 (-1.2)*
1966-1975		8.7 (-6.5)**	11.7 (-5.7)**
1956-1965	11.7 (-10.4)**	19.6 (-2.9)	20.8 (-2.7)*
1946-1955	19.3 (-2.5)**	18.4 (-1.9)	25.7 (+5.0)**
1936-1945	25.4 (+9.4)**	22.4 (+8.1)**	16.8 (+3.9)**
1926-1935	17.1 (+2.6)**	17.1 (+5.1)**	12.1 (+1.5)
1916-1925	14.4 (+1.5)*	10.9 (+0.9)	8.0 (+0.3)
Before 1916	12.2 (-0.5)	2.9 (-2.7)**	1.5 (-1.1)*
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Table 3.3.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Musical Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			4.6 (+0.0)
1966-1975		11.6 (-3.6)**	15.1 (-2.3)**
1956-1965	19.4 (-2.7)**	19.5 (-3.0)**	23.0 (-0.5)
1946-1955	24.6 (+2.8)**	21.4 (+1.1)	22.3 (+1.6)**
1936-1945	18.6 (+2.6)**	19.1 (+4.8)**	14.7 (+1.8)**
1926-1935	16.1 (+1.6)**	14.3 (+2.3)**	12.1 (+1.5)**
1916-1925	12.1 (-0.8)**	11.7 (+1.7)**	6.7 (-1.0)**
Before 1916	9.3 (-3.4)**	2.5 (-3.1)**	1.6 (-1.0)**
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Table 3.4.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Jazz Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			5.2 (+0.6)*
1966-1975		18.2 (+3.0)**	23.0 (+5.6)**
1956-1965	44.1 (+22.0)**	32.2 (+9.7)**	25.8 (+2.3)**
1946-1955	29.6 (+7.8)**	26.4 (+6.1)**	21.8 (+1.1)
1936-1945	10.5 (-5.5)**	10.5 (-3.8)**	10.8 (-2.1)**
1926-1935	9.2 (-5.3)**	8.4 (-3.6)**	8.3 (-2.3)**
1916-1925	3.9 (-9.0)**	3.3 (-6.7)**	4.7 (-3.0)**
Before 1916	2.6 (-10.1)**	0.9 (-4.7)**	0.4 (-2.2)**
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Table 3.5.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Theater Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			5.0 (+0.4)
1966-1975		10.6 (-4.6)**	14.8 (-2.6)**
1956-1965	22.8 (+0.7)	20.6 (-1.9)**	20.9 (-2.6)**
1946-1955	22.3 (+0.5)	22.1 (+1.8)**	23.7 (+3.0)**
1936-1945	20.5 (+4.5)**	18.7 (+4.4)**	15.5 (+2.6)**
1926-1935	15.1 (+0.6)	16.0 (+4.0)**	10.8 (+0.2)
1916-1925	11.6 (-1.3)**	9.6 (-0.4)	7.0 (-0.7)
Before 1916	7.7 (-5.0)**	2.4 (-3.2)**	2.3 (-0.3)
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Table 3.6.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Ballet Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			5.6 (+1.0)
1966-1975		13.9 (-1.3)	12.6 (-4.8)**
1956-1965	25.5 (+3.4)**	25.7 (+3.2)*	22.3 (-1.2)
1946-1955	25.3 (+0.5)	17.2 (+1.8)**	26.7 (+3.0)**
1936-1945	18.8 (+4.5)**	16.8 (+4.4)**	14.4 (+2.6)**
1926-1935	11.8 (-2.7)**	11.0 (-1.0)	12.0 (+1.4)
1916-1925	9.6 (-3.3)**	13.2 (+3.2)**	4.9 (-2.8)**
Before 1916	9.0 (-3.7)**	2.3 (-3.3)**	1.4 (-1.2)**
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Table 3.7.
Cohort % Contribution to Total Art Museum Attendances, by Year

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			5.2 (+0.6)**
1966-1975		15.1 (-0.1)	17.2 (-0.2)
1956-1965	22.8 (+0.7)**	23.8 (+1.3)**	21.8 (-1.7)**
1946-1955	25.1 (+3.3)**	22.8 (+2.5)**	24.5 (+3.8)**
1936-1945	20.3 (+4.3)**	15.4 (+1.1)**	16.3 (+3.4)**
1926-1935	12.3 (-2.2)**	13.4 (+1.4)**	9.4 (-1.2)**
1916-1925	12.0 (-0.9)**	7.8 (-2.2)**	4.5 (-3.2)**
Before 1916	7.4 (-5.3)**	1.6 (-4.0)**	1.1 (-1.5)**
	100.0	100.0	100.0

See footnote on Table 3.1.

Early Baby boomers: 1946–1955 The early boomers show a pattern of participation that is starkly in contrast with the picture of low arts participation of the later boomers just discussed. Indeed their participation rate was higher than the sample as a whole in six of the art forms in 1982, and that was true for all seven forms by 1997. This finding jibes with the personal observations of many arts-organization managers, but it goes against the conclusions drawn from NEA Research Report #34.¹⁵ The possibility that younger and older boomers are so different from each other will be taken up again in Chapter 4.

Late Depression and World War II Cohort: 1936–1945 Looking across Tables 3.1–3.7, the pattern of arts participation of the Great Depression and World War II cohort is very clear. In 1982 and in 1997 as well, they were a larger part of the audience than would be expected by their proportion of the sample in six out seven of the benchmark art forms. It is also notable that over this span of years their over representation in the arts audience became less pronounced. The only form for which their participation was less than expected is jazz.

Early Depression Cohort: 1926–1935 Following the pattern just observed, the arts participation of this cohort, who experienced the Great Depression in their childhood and came to maturity during World War II, was high, being greater than their proportion in the sample as a whole in four of the benchmark arts in 1982 and five in 1997. Their participation in jazz and museum attendance was less than expected. The figures for jazz fit the pattern of a youthful jazz audience noted in Chapter 2, but no explanation for their continuing low art museum attendance comes readily to mind.

Roaring Twenties Cohort: 1916–1925 Members of this cohort, whose early experience was the boom times following World War I, were between seventy-two and eighty-one years-of-age in 1997, so it is not surprising, given their advanced age, that their arts participation was below average for five of the seven benchmark arts. Their participation was higher than expected only for classical music and opera.

Pre-World War I Cohort: Born Before 1916 This “cohort” includes all those born before 1916, thus they were at least 67 in 1982 and at least 82 in 1997. It is not surprising, given their advanced age and lower education relative to baby boomers, that they are not over represented in the audience of any of the benchmark arts. It is more surprising at first glance that their arts participation, while

still low, more nearly approached, and in the case of classical music reached, the level that would be expected in terms of their proportion of the sample as a whole. The attendance rates of these older persons may be due to the fact that the factors that make for more arts participation, such as higher education, greater wealth, and an active mind, also make for better health so that by this time in life, surviving members of the cohort are more likely to have been inclined to arts participation all along than is true of still young cohorts.

Part 2: Attendees’ Rates of Attendance across Cohorts

Having looked at the contribution of each cohort to the arts audience as it has changed over time; focus now turns from the question of “attendance” to those who attend the arts. Do members of all cohorts, on average, attend the same number of times per year? This question is of importance because some commentators have observed that those in older cohorts, who do attend, attend more often than do attendees in the more recent cohorts. Thus, to draw one hypothetical example, it may be that those in a pre-World War II cohort are likely to attend five times a year while baby boomers, on average, attend twice a year. If this were the case two fifty-year olds would account for $(2 \times 5) = 10$ attendances, while it would take five twenty year olds to account for 10 attendances $(5 \times 2) = 10$.

To quickly show the degree, to which a few attendees account for the lion’s share of the attendance of a cohort, the proportion of attendees of a given cohort is compared with their contribution to the entire audience. These comparisons for the cohorts in each benchmark art form are shown in Tables 3.8 to 3.14. These tables are parallel to Tables 2.8 to 2.14 analyzed in Chapter 2. The figures in the tables are “difference scores.”¹⁶ The (+) sign in the upper-right-most cell of Table 3.8, for example, means that in 1997 attendees in this cohort, on average, attended more often than did attendees in the sample as a whole. In other words, a relatively few in the youngest cohort accounted for much of the attendance of this cohort at classical music concerts. The (-) sign in the cell just below in the same table means that in 1997 those respondents under twenty years of age who attended did so less often than did all attendees that year. The size of the numbers suggests the degree to which a few or many people of a cohort contributed to the audience.¹⁷ The numerous no-zero differences scores in Tables 3.8 through 3.14 show that, indeed, attendees in different cohorts often do not all attend equally often.

Focusing briefly on the youngest cohort who were old enough to be surveyed only in 1997, those born between 1976 and 1980, there is no clear pattern in the frequency of their attendance, since a few attendees accounted for the cohort’s attendance in about half the art forms, while a larger number of attendees

Table 3.8.
Classical Music - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			+1.1*
1966-1975		-1.0	-3.7**
1956-1965	+1.4	-1.4	-3.2**
1946-1955	+0.3	-2.8*	+0.0
1936-1945	+0.6	-0.2	+0.7
1926-1935	-0.9	+1.6	+2.8**
1916-1925	-1.4*	+3.2**	+1.8*
Before 1916	-0.1	+0.5	+0.6

These differences are statistically significant where indicated (* $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$). A statistically significant difference means that the probability of this difference occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for $p<.05$) or less than 1% (for $p<.01$), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this difference actually exists.

participated less often in the rest. A pattern is, however, much clearer for the early Generation Xers, those born between 1966 and 1975. Only for jazz did a few aficionados account for the cohort’s attendance in 1992 and in 1997. For all the rest of the art forms, a larger number of Generation Xers attended less often.

Now focus turns to the baby boom and pre-baby boom cohorts that participated in all rounds of the SPPA survey. Here, rather than focusing on each cohort individually, a contrast is made between the two baby-boom cohorts on the one hand and the three cohorts that preceded them, because these two groups of cohorts show quite different patterns.¹⁸ In order to get an impressionistic summary measure of these difference scores, the number of times attendees of a particular cohort attended more or less often than would be expected from the total sample rate is examined for the seven benchmark arts in 1982 and 1997.

Focusing on the two baby boom cohorts, very interesting variations are found. A larger number of attendees tend to participate infrequently, and this trend became greater from 1982 to 1997. This means that baby boom arts attendees, at least over the span of years covered in the survey, tend to sample an art form rather than showing a strong commitment to arts participation as shown by their infrequent attendance.

Turning to the three pre-baby boom cohorts, there is a clear trend, and it is the opposite of the pattern for baby boomers. While in 1982 more infrequent samplers were found, by 1997 the attendance for these cohorts was contributed by relatively few attendees who tended to go more often. While this trend is apparent in all three

pre-boomer cohorts, it is shown most dramatically by those in the cohort born between 1926 and 1935, since across all art forms, attendees in this cohort tended to be samplers in 1982 and aficionados in 1997. There is a better chance to understand why the frequency of attendance varies so dramatically between baby boomers and pre-boomer cohorts when, in later chapters, the predictors of arts attendance across cohorts are examined.

Table 3.9.
Opera Music - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			-1.7
1966-1975		-2.5	-3.6*
1956-1965	-3.0	-1.1	-0.7
1946-1955	-1.3	-2.5	+2.0
1936-1945	+5.6**	+3.6	+1.1
1926-1935	-1.4	+2.0	+1.5
1916-1925	-0.5	+0.2	+1.1
Before 1916	+0.8	+0.1	+0.1

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Table 3.10.
Musical - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			+0.0
1966-1975		1.3	-0.8
1956-1965	-0.2	-2.1*	-0.4
1946-1955	+0.3	-1.2	-0.9
1936-1945	-0.8	+1.1	+1.4*
1926-1935	-0.1	+0.8	+0.8
1916-1925	-0.7	+2.7**	-0.1
Before 1916	+1.5**	+0.2	+0.3

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Table 3.11.
Jazz - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			-0.3
1966-1975		+0.2	+3.7**
1956-1965	+4.0**	+3.2*	-0.1
1946-1955	+1.2	+1.8	-2.8*
1936-1945	-2.5**	-2.9**	-1.2
1926-1935	-0.9	-1.3	+0.0
1916-1925	-2.0**	-1.2*	+0.6
Before 1916	+0.2	+0.0	-0.1

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Table 3.12.
Theater - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			-0.6
1966-1975		-2.7**	-0.1
1956-1965	+2.8**	-0.5	-0.9
1946-1955	-1.5	-0.5	-0.1
1936-1945	+1.5	+1.4	+1.4
1926-1935	-2.0*	+2.1*	+0.0
1916-1925	-0.2	-0.1	+0.2
Before 1916	-0.6	+0.3	+0.2

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Table 3.13.
Ballet - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			+0.3
1966-1975		-0.8	-0.4
1956-1965	+5.0**	-0.7	-2.4
1946-1955	-2.4	-4.6*	+1.7
1936-1945	-1.9	+2.3	+0.4
1926-1935	-1.3	-1.1	+1.7
1916-1925	-1.5	+5.1**	-1.0
Before 1916	+1.9	+0.1	-0.5

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Table 3.14.
Art Museum - Difference between % of Total Times Attended and % of People Attending

	1982	1992	1997
1976-1980			+0.4
1966-1975		-0.5	-0.6
1956-1965	-0.2	-1.3	-2.4**
1946-1955	-1.9*	-1.1	+1.0
1936-1945	+1.5*	+0.4	+2.8**
1926-1935	-1.4*	+2.0**	+0.1
1916-1925	+1.3*	+0.4	-0.9**
Before 1916	+0.6	-0.0	-0.3

See footnote on Table 3.8.

Chapter 4

THE IMPORTANCE OF AGE AS A DETERMINANT OF ARTS PARTICIPATION

In Chapters 2 and 3 we looked at the changing age and cohort composition of the audience for each of the seven benchmark arts in the United States over the years from 1982 to 1997. Here, focussing on the data of the 1997 survey, we seek to find the importance of age in the context of other factors as a determinant of arts participation. First we ask how well age predicts participation for each of the art forms; next, we ask the importance of age when other measured factors that have been shown to influence arts participation are taken into account; and which of the other variables are the most important in predicting participation in addition to age. Finally, we ask the same set of questions when considering a summary measure of participation in all of the seven benchmark arts together.

The reason for controlling for the effects of other variables when looking at the importance of age is to show the effects of age, *per se*, after statistically eliminating the effect of these other factors. As will be shown, the influence of nine other factors is considerable. For example, as seen in Chapters 2 and 3, persons in their middle years tend to go more often than those who are younger or older. The data presented in this chapter, however, show that when the other factors are taken into account, arts participation rises significantly with age. The meaning of these results is discussed in detail in the concluding section of the chapter.

METHODS

A series of ordinary least squares regression analyses are used to compare the relationship between arts participation and age, with the relationship between participation and age after controlling for the effects of nine other relevant variables. Following our focus in Chapters 2 and 3 on both attendance and attendees, we are interested in explaining both whether respondents attend an art form in the prior twelve months and also their frequency of attendance. Thus, parallel sets of regression analyses are presented, one with the frequency of attendance as the dependent variable, and the other with whether or not the respondent is an attendee as the dependent variable.¹⁹

Independent Variable

In this chapter, “Age” is measured as the respondent’s year of age at the time they took the survey.

Dependent Variables

“Attendances” is measured as the number of times R attended an art form during the last year. A few respondents attended one or another art form 50 to 150 times in a year. While it is perfectly possible to attend this many times in a year, such persons are not ordinarily what we think of as audience members in the usual sense of the term. In all likelihood these very frequent attendees are art critics, art teachers, or managers. Accordingly, to correct for the skewing effect of these few respondents, we set 24 as the highest frequency, so that the top of the attendance measure scale is “24 or more.”

“Attendee” is simply whether the respondent attended the art form during the last year (0=No, 1=Yes).

“Summary Arts Participation” is the number of art forms that the respondent attended during the last year (range: 0 to 7). This measure does not take into account how often the respondent attended arts events. The measure here is the respondent’s range of arts attendance and not their total number of attendances at a given form. Thus the person who attended seven jazz concerts and no other art form gets a score of 1 while the person who participated in each form just once attains a score of 7. Since the age composition of the audience for jazz is younger than that for the other arts, and since its audience differs in other ways as well, excluding jazz from the summary measure was considered, but the results were virtually the same as when all seven art forms were included in the summary measure.

Control Variables

Gender was measured as Female=1, Male=0 because prior research has shown that women more often attend the arts than do men. Accordingly, the variable is designated “Female” in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.

Race was coded as Black=1, Other=0 because “Other” is a mixture of several different categories including white, Asian, and non-white Hispanic. Accordingly, the variable is designated “Black” in the tables.

Marital status was reported as Never Married, Married, Divorced, Separated, or Widowed. The rates of arts participation of each of these groups was compared in a preliminary analysis and the groups most alike in their participation were grouped together. Never Married, Divorced, and Separated had similarly high rates of participation and accordingly were grouped together and called “Not Married.” They were coded =1. Those who were Married or Widowed generally had lower rates of participation and were coded =0.

Household income is designated “Income” in the tables. It was coded 1–7 on the survey responses, and these correspond to the following income ranges:

- 1=\$10,000 or less
- 2=\$10,001 to \$20,000
- 3=\$20,001 to \$30,000
- 4=\$30,001 to \$40,000
- 5=\$40,001 to \$50,000
- 6=\$50,001 to \$75,000
- 7=\$75,001 to \$100,000
- 8=Over \$100,000

“Education” indicates the highest level completed by the respondent. It has a range of 1–13 as follows:

- 1=7th grade or less
- 2=8th grade
- 3=9th to 11th grade
- 4=12th grade but no diploma
- 5=High school diploma/equivalent
- 6=Vocational/Technical program after high school
- 7=Some college but no degree
- 8=Associate’s degree
- 9=Bachelor’s degree
- 10=Graduate or professional school but no degree
- 11=Master’s degree
- 12=Doctorate (PhD, EDD)
- 13=Professional (Law LLB or JB; Medicine/MD; Dentistry/DD)

The ordering is the same as in the questionnaires. Initially it was thought that respondents with a Doctorate should be ranked higher than those with a professional degree, so a number of preliminary runs were made, and, in the case of most art forms, respondents with professional degrees were more likely to attend than were those with a Doctorate.

As in the case of the respondent’s education, “Father’s Education” was measured as the highest grade or degree earned by the respondent’s father, using the same scale ranging from 1 to 13. Before selecting Father’s education as the best measure of the educational atmosphere in the home, a number of preliminary analyses were made. Father’s education was found to correlate somewhat better with the respondent’s arts attendance than did Mother’s education, and including both did not appreciably increase the ability to predict respondent’s arts participation over using Father’s education alone.

“Children” comprises a continuous measure of the number of children 18 or under in household. Earlier SPPA surveys had shown that having children six and under in the household was a much better predictor of lower arts participation, but alas, the 1997 survey did not ask about children six or younger.

“Health” is a five point ordinal scale of self-reported health status with the following levels:

- 1=Poor
- 2=Fair
- 3=Good
- 4=Very Good
- 5=Excellent

Several more focussed measures of health status were available in the survey. These included self-reports of eyesight, hearing, and the ease of walking. Hearing ability was a good predictor of Classical Music concert attendance, and the ease of walking was a good predictor of art museum attendance, but overall none of these singly or in combination significantly increased the predictive value of the global health measure alone.

“Metro” is the dichotomous indicator of the size of the respondent’s place of residence. It is approximately equivalent to the “size of place” variable in the three earlier surveys. Metro was coded 1 if the respondent lives in any of the following eleven major metropolitan areas as operationalized in the survey, and 0 if they do not:

- Boston-Worcester-Lawrence,
- Chicago-Gary-Kenosha,
- Dallas-Ft. Worth,
- Detroit-Ann Arbor-Flint,
- Houston-Galveston-Bazoria,
- Los Angeles,
- Miami-Ft. Lauderdale,
- New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island,
- Philadelphia-Wilmington-Atlantic City,
- San Francisco-Oakland-San Jose,
- Washington DC-Baltimore

In a preliminary analysis we also tried to use the “state and counties” variable in the 1997 survey to approximate the “region” variable of earlier surveys. The level of detail provided in the 1997 data made it possible to see that the range of

variation within regions and states was as wide as the variation between regions. For example, both Florida and Texas proved to be quite different from the rest of the South, and the rates of arts participation in the Central Valley of California was among the lowest in the nation, while those of the San Francisco and Los Angeles areas were among the highest.

No conceptually justifiable division among geographic areas was any clearer than the metropolitan area measure just described, so it is used in the regression analyses.

RESULTS

The three tables below show the results of the regression analyses. Just as in Chapters 2 and 3, we are interested in both whether the respondent attended an art form in the previous year and the respondent’s frequency of attendance. Accordingly, the dependent variable in Table 4.1 is the frequency of attendance, while the dependent variable in Table 4.2 measures whether the respondent attended a particular art form during the prior year or not.

Reading the Tables

A good deal of information is condensed in Tables 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3. Take the left-hand portion of Table 4.1 for example. This shows the results for Classical Music attendance. The “Beta” is the standardised coefficient so its range is from +1.0 to -1.0. The focus is on the Betas because their relative strength is comparable across variables and across models as well. The relationships are all positive unless a negative sign precedes them. Thus, for example both being black and having children 18 or under in the household tends to reduce the level of Classical Music attendance.

The measure “R-square” refers to the amount of variance in the dependent variable that is explained by the independent and control variables included in the model. The one or two stars (* or **) indicate whether the variable in that row of the table contributes significantly to predicting the dependent variable with the difference being obtained by chance in less than one case in fifty ($p<.05$) or one chance in a hundred ($p<.01$) respectively. Unless otherwise noted, just the statistically significant relationships will be discussed. Finally, note that the smaller top part of the column represents the bivariate relationship between arts attendance and age, while the longer, bottom part of the column shows the predictive value of age when the contribution of the other nine control variables is taken into account.

The corresponding right-hand part of Table 4.2 shows the same set of information, in this case for being an “attendee” rather than the frequency of “attendance”

shown in Table 4.1. As an inspection of the three tables shows, the pattern of relationship for attendance (shown in Table 4.1) and attendee (Shown in Table 4.2) are very similar. Accordingly, the focus will be on attendance except where noted. Table 4.3 presents the results for the “Summary Arts Participation” measure defined above.

The Effect of Age on Arts Participation With and Without Controls

Here the figures in the top two rows of Table 4.1 are compared with the age and R-square figures in the bottom part of the table. Focussing first on the top row all the way across the table, one can see that when the influence of other factors is not taken into account the relationship between age and arts attendance is positive for classical music and opera, and negative for jazz and art museum attendance. As indicated by the lack of a significance, however, there is no apparent relationship between the age of the respondent and attendance at musicals, theater, and ballet. The R-squares are all less than one percent (.01) suggesting that, while there is a statistically significant association between age and participation in classical music, opera, jazz, and art museums, the relationships are substantively trivial.

With the exception of jazz, the Betas for age are positive and significant for all the art forms when the effects of the nine control variables are taken into account. Taken together, these results suggest that the direct effects of age on arts participation is masked by the effects of other factors including those measured by the control variables. When these variables are taken into account, arts attendance increases with age. This means that older persons attend the art forms more often than do younger people of the same gender, education, income, etc.

Contribution of Controls to Predicting Participation in Each Benchmark Art

In this section we look at Tables 4.1 and 4.2 in order to identify the control variables that are most important in predicting participation in each of the benchmark arts. Please note that each of the statements made in this section is predicated on controlling for the effects of age and the other measured variables.

The figures for *Classical Music* are shown in the first column of these two tables. On inspection, they show that age is the second-most important variable in predicting arts attendance. The respondent’s amount of formal education is the most potent predictor of classical music attendance. What is more, father’s education is the third most important predictor. Interestingly, respondent’s health, race, gender, and number of children do not importantly affect classical music attendance. The relative magnitude of the figures in Table 4.2 is very much like those of Table 4.1 with the exception of household income. Income is a better predictor of whether one attends classical music concerts (Table 4.2) than of how often one attends

Table 4.1.

Regression Results of Number of Attendances on Age (standardized coefficients)

	Classical	Opera	Musical	Jazz	Theater	Ballet	Art Museum
Bivariate Model							
Age	0.075**	0.020*	0.013	-0.058**	0.014	0.005	-0.033**
R-square	0.006	0.000	0.000	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.001
Multivariate Model							
Age	0.143**	0.062**	0.065**	-0.024	0.078**	0.050**	0.046**
Female	0.023*	0.027*	0.069**	-0.017	0.023*	0.046**	0.032**
Black	-0.024*	-0.019	0.012	0.054**	-0.001	-0.015	-0.010
Not Married	0.066**	0.049**	0.042**	0.077**	0.069**	0.038**	0.092**
Income	0.054**	0.043**	0.082**	0.050**	0.039**	0.044**	0.068**
Education	0.171**	0.097**	0.136**	0.088**	0.145**	0.064**	0.185**
Father's Educ	0.070**	0.031*	0.030*	0.038**	0.037**	0.045**	0.085**
Children	-0.008	-0.015	-0.040**	-0.064**	-0.029*	0.004	-0.036**
Health	0.024*	0.025*	0.052**	0.004	0.023*	0.021	0.026*
Metro	0.030**	0.047**	0.038**	0.016	0.042**	0.041**	0.073**
R-square	0.076	0.030	0.060	0.037	0.049	0.021	0.097

These effects are statistically significant where indicated (*p<.05; **p<.01). A statistically significant effect means that the probability of this effect occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for p<.05) or less than 1% (for p<.01), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this effect actually exists.

Table 4.2.
Regression Results of Whether One Attends or Not on Age (standardized coefficients)

	Classical	Opera	Musical	Jazz	Theater	Ballet	Art Museum
Bivariate Model							
Age	0.058**	0.000	-0.007	-0.083**	0.001	-0.005	-0.078**
R-square	0.003	0.000	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.006
Multivariate Mode							
Age	0.133**	0.049**	0.064**	-0.003	0.078**	0.045**	0.018
Female	0.069**	0.055**	0.098**	-0.004	0.045**	0.089**	0.050**
Black	-0.027**	-0.027*	0.021*	0.083**	0.024*	-0.017	0.015
Not Married	0.065**	0.044**	0.041**	0.104**	0.071**	0.042**	0.051**
Income	0.082**	0.065**	0.146**	0.100**	0.073**	0.058**	0.106**
Education	0.215**	0.129**	0.190**	0.140**	0.193**	0.105**	0.262**
Father's Educ	0.094**	0.036**	0.036**	0.067**	0.044**	0.053**	0.074**
Children	-0.035**	-0.019	-0.037**	-0.055**	-0.042**	0.013	-0.030**
Health	0.039**	0.032**	0.050**	0.018	0.040**	0.022	0.047**
Metro	0.022*	0.052**	0.047**	0.010	0.025*	0.029**	0.057**
R-square	0.124	0.049	0.116	0.081	0.084	0.040	0.153

See footnote on Table 4.1.

(Table 4.1). This attendee/attendance difference is discussed at greater length below.

Looking at the Betas for *Opera* in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, we find again that age is the second most important predictor of attendance, and education is the most important. Not having children in the home is the third most important predictor of opera attendance. Residence in one of the largest metropolitan areas has more to do with predicting opera attendance than with any other art form, with the exception of visiting art museums.

Looking at the Betas for *Musicals* in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, the respondent's education and household income are again most important in predicting attendance. Unlike the art forms discussed so far, however, gender is the third most important variable in predicting arts attendance, women going to musicals significantly more often than men.

Again, education is the most important predictor of attending *Jazz* events as seen by the Betas for jazz in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, but beyond that the pattern is different from the other arts forms. The second most important predictor is marital status, with those not currently married more likely to attend. The third most important variable in predicting jazz attendance is the lack of children living in the respondent's home. The fourth most important is being African-American. Neither age nor gender are significant predictors, but they are interesting, nonetheless, because unlike their coefficients for any of the other art forms, attendance tends to be more frequent for men than for women and tends to go down rather than up with age.

The pattern of best predictors of *Theater* attendance is the same as for opera going as can be seen by looking at the relevant Betas in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. Education is the most important predictor, age is second, being unmarried is third, and residence in one of the larger metropolitan areas is fourth. Being female follows education and age as the most important predictor of *Ballet* attendance. Income is the fourth. As for all the other art forms, education is the most important predictor of *Art Museum* attendance, and as for classical music, father's education is the third most important. The second most important predictor is being unmarried. Residence in a metropolitan area, income, and age follow in that order. It is notable that art museum attendance is less dependent on age than is attendance at any of the other benchmark arts.

The Relative Contribution of Each of the Control Variables

Here looking across the rows of Betas in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 focus is put on the contribution of each of the control variables in turn. The goal is to predict partic-

ipation in each of the various art forms, when the effects of age and each of the other measured control variables are taken into account. Again, the results for attendance shown in the Betas of Table 4.1 and attendee shown in Table 4.2 are very similar, and so they will be considered separately only in the case of Income where the figures are clearly different.

Looking first across the row for *Gender* (“Female”) it can be seen that with the other variables taken into account, women are significantly more likely to attend each of the art forms, except for jazz. The predominance of females is most pronounced for ballet and musical theater attendance. As for jazz, men attend somewhat (but not significantly) more often (as indicated by the negative but not significant sign of the Beta -0.017).

Of all the control variables, *Race* is least often a significant predictor of arts attendance. Only in the case of classical music where African-Americans attend less often and jazz where they attend more often than others, is race a significant predictor of attendance.

Being single, divorced, or widowed, that is to say, *Not Married* is a significant predictor of attendance at each of the seven art forms. What is more, currently being without a companion is the second most important predictor of both jazz and art museum attendance.

Higher *Income* significantly influences attendance at each of the forms, but it is the second most important predictor for only one of them, attending musicals. In the common stereotype, wealth is associated with classical music attendance, opera, and art museum going, but income is only the fifth most important control variable for these art forms. As noted earlier, the relative magnitude of the Betas in Table 4.2 is very much like that of Table 4.1 with the exception of household income. Income is a better predictor of whether one attends each of the seven art forms (Table 4.2) than of how often one attends (Table 4.1). This suggests that having sufficient money is important to arts attendance, but, after this threshold is reached, other factors are more important in predicting how often one attends. In other words, respondents with higher levels of income are more likely to attend the arts, but not necessarily to participate more often than respondents with lower incomes, all other things being equal.

Education is far and away the best predictor of attendance at every one of the seven benchmark arts. It is the only control variable that is consistently more important than age. The Beta coefficients in Table 4.1 show that education is most important for art museum attendance, classical music, and theater attendance in that order. The general importance of education in fostering arts attendance is further underlined by the fact that, even controlling for respondent’s education,

Father's Education is a significant predictor for all the art forms, and it is the third most important predictor for classical music and art museum going.

Earlier SPPA reports have shown the importance of having young children in reducing arts participation. The measure inserted in the 1997 survey, *Children 18 and Under* in the household, has proved a less potent depressant. Children significantly reduce attendance at musicals, theater, and art museums. Only in the case of jazz does children in the household become the third most important predictor coming just behind education and being unmarried.

While it is not among the leading predictors of arts attendance, *Good Health* understandably contributes significantly to arts participation. This holds true in all the art forms except jazz and ballet. The audiences of these forms are younger, on average, but since the effects of age has been taken into account, it must be that the older people who do attend these art forms must be, on average, in better health than are older participants in the other art forms.

Finally, *Metropolitan Place of Residence* adds significantly to predicting participation in each of the art forms with the exception of jazz, yet jazz would seem to be as much an urban form as the others. It may be that the costs of production and the number of people involved in production are lower than for the other art forms, so it is easier to tour outside the metropolitan areas. In addition, it may be that the younger audience for jazz is more likely to be college students and students are more likely to be concentrated in a few places such as Madison, Wisconsin; Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Austin, Texas; and western Massachusetts, outside metropolitan areas. Such places present greater opportunities to attend jazz concerts than do most other non-metropolitan places who include fewer young adults in school.

The Summary Arts Participation Measure

As noted above, in order to get a picture of the contribution of age to arts participation in general, the variable “Summary Arts Participation” was created by summing the number of benchmark arts attended by the respondent. Then an analysis parallel to those discussed so far in this chapter was performed. At one extreme of the summary measure are those who have attended none of the art forms in the prior year. At the other are respondents who have attended all seven in the prior year.

To measure the contribution of age to predicting general arts participation with and without controls, an OLS regression analysis parallel to the attendee measures shown in Table 4.2 were performed. Table 4.3 shows the results of this analysis. The left-hand side of the table shows the results when all seven benchmark arts are

considered together. The right side shows the same analysis made without taking into account attendance at jazz concerts. We inspected this latter measure because, as shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, many of the predictors of jazz participation are different from those of the other art forms.

Table 4.3.
Regression Results of Summary Measure of Attendance on Age
(standardized coefficients)

	Sum of 7 Arts	Sum of 6 Arts (w/o Jazz)
Bivariate Model		
Age	-0.03050957**	-0.014
R-square	0.001	0
Multivariate Model		
Age	0.090**	0.102**
Female	0.094**	0.106**
Black	0.021*	0.003
Not Married	0.098**	0.084**
Income	0.153**	0.147**
Education	0.302**	0.304**
Father's Educ	0.095**	0.090*
Children	-0.052**	-0.044**
Health	0.059**	0.063**
Metro	0.057**	0.061**
R-square	0.236	0.233

See footnote on Table 4.1.

The figures for arts participation with and without jazz prove to be remarkably similar. There are only two differences of note. The first has to do with the bivariate relationship between arts participation and the age of the respondent. As seen in the top row of Table 4.3, age does not significantly predict arts participation when jazz attendance is not included in the measure. When jazz is included in the arts participation measure, however, there is a significant negative relationship between arts participation and age.

The only control variable showing a significant difference is the race measure, Black. When jazz is not included in the measure, there is no difference between the number of forms attended by African-Americans and attended by others. When jazz, which has a significantly higher attendance rate among African-Americans than among others is included in the summary arts participation measure, blacks attendance is significantly higher than for others in the sample. Since, with this one

exception, the results are so similar, only the results for the seven arts together will be considered in the following discussion.

The importance of controlling for the influence of other variables when considering the relationship between age and general arts attendance is dramatically clear in comparing its direct relationship with its relationship after the effects of the control variables are taken into account. As the left side of the top line of Table 4.3 shows, the slight but statistically significant Beta is negative, meaning that attendance tends to go down as age goes up. Taking the nine control variables into account, however, the relationship between arts participation and age becomes positive and significant. This means that, other variables taken into account, the number of art forms attended tends to go up as people get older.

Examining the Beta coefficients in the left-hand column can see the relative importance of age in predicting arts participation. As we have seen for each of the art forms considered separately, education, not age, contributes the most to predicting the number of art forms attended. Interestingly, household income is the second most potent predictor. Next gender, marital status, father's education, along with age are all about equally important predictors. Then children in the home, health, and residence in a metropolitan area are all about equally important, and finally race, while being significant, is the least substantively important predictor of the number of art forms attended.

CHAPTER 5 CORRELATES OF BABY BOOMER, PRE-BOOMER, AND POST-BOOMER PARTICIPATION

Here in Chapter 5 is concluded the exploration of the causes of arts participation begun in Chapter 4. There the focus was on the whole 1997 sample, here the focus is on each of three major birth cohorts, baby boomers, those born before them, and those born after the boomers.

The sample is divided into three parts because some of the other measured factors are more likely to affect young people, and some are more likely to affect those who are older. For example, adults under the age of forty are more likely than their elders to have young children in the home, so the presence of young children in the home is more likely to depress the arts participation of young people, likewise, older people are more likely to have their arts participation reduced by ill health. In addition, the same variable may mean quite different things depending on the respondent's age. For example, for young people "not married" means being single, separated, or divorced. Such people are more likely to actively seek partners and engage in arts participation, while their married age-mates are likely to have their leisure activities taken up in family activities. For older cohorts, "not married" is likely to mean widowed which may mean these individuals have no one to accompany them to arts events.

METHODS

Birth Cohorts

As noted in Chapter 1, birth cohorts consist of all those persons born within the same span of years. The number of years to be included in a cohort depends on the research question at hand. In Chapter 3 cohorts were divided into persons born in the same ten-year period because of an interest in the differential experience of those born at historically specific moments. Focal here are the factors differentially influencing the arts participation of those in different stages of their lives, with a special interest in baby boomers. Consequently, the respondents are divided into three groups: baby boomers—those born between 1946 and 1965, pre-baby boomers—those born before 1946, and post-baby boomers—those born after 1965. The number of respondents in each of these three groups is as follows: pre-boomers: 4076, boomers: 5317, and post-boomers: 2653.

Independent and Dependent Variables

As in Chapter 4, the independent variable is “Age” measured as the respondents’ years of age at the time they participated in the survey.

The dependant variable is “Attendances.” It is measured as the number of times R attended an art form during the last year—a few respondents attended one or another art form 50 to 150 times in a year. While it is perfectly possible to attend this many times in a year, such persons are not ordinarily thought of as audience members in the usual sense of the term. In all likelihood these outliers are art critics, art teachers, or managers. Accordingly, to correct for the skewing effect of these few respondents, 24 was set as the highest frequency, so that the top of the attendance measure scale is “24 or more.”

“Summary Arts Participation” is the number of art forms that the respondent attended during the last year (range: 0 to 7). This measure does not take into account how often the respondent attended arts events.

Control Variables

Gender, Race, Marital Status, Household Income, Education, Father’s Education, Children in the Home, Health, and Metropolitan Place of Residence are measured in exactly the same way as they were in Chapter 4. The reader is referred to that discussion.

One additional control variable, “Student Status,” is added for those respondents in the post-boomer sample. Since a goodly number of post-boomer respondents are still in school, it was good to be able to take this into account in evaluating the impact of education on arts participation. SPPA surveyors were instructed to ask all respondents 18 to 25 years old: “During the last 12 months, were you enrolled in a high school, college, or university?” Since the oldest persons asked this question were 25, those post-boomers born between 1966 and 1971 were not asked this question. Consequently, this measure misses the fact that some of the older post-boomers have not completed their formal education.

FINDINGS

Three lines of findings are discussed in searching for differences in the predictors of arts attendance of boomers, pre-boomers and post-boomers. First, how successfully the measured variables in aggregate predict arts participation in the three age groups is examined. Second, the best predictors of arts participation in each art form and in the summary measure of arts participation are found. Finally, looking across the tables, the focus will be on the relative importance of age and each of the control variables in predicting arts attendance at all of the benchmark arts.

The results of the analyses are summarized in Tables 5.1 through 5.8. They can be read in exactly the same way as the three tables in Chapter 4, so refer to the discussion “Reading the Tables” offered there.

Table 5.1.
Regression Results of Classical Music Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.088**	0.093**	-0.019
Female	0.080**	0.011	-0.017
Black	-0.022	-0.019	-0.036
Not Married	0.027	0.077**	0.026
Income	0.126**	0.043*	-0.012
Education	0.192**	0.172**	0.132**
Father's Educ	0.065**	0.083**	0.047
Children	0.012	0.013	-0.015
Health	0.028	0.026	-0.006
Metro	0.026	0.052**	-0.003
Student		0.129**	
R-square	0.100	0.082	0.049

These effects are statistically significant where indicated (* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$). A statistically significant effect means that the probability of this effect occurring merely by chance is less than 5% (for $p < .05$) or less than 1% (for $p < .01$), based on this sample. Therefore, we can reasonably conclude that this effect actually exists.

The Aggregate Explanation of Arts Attendance

The row of numbers across Tables 5.1 through 5.8 gives the R-square for each of the twenty-four OLS regression analyses. R-square, as noted above in Chapter 4, is a measure of how well the variables together predict arts attendance. If the variables together perfectly predicted attendance then the R-square would be 1.00.

The bottom line of Table 5.1 shows that the measured variables account for 10 percent of the variance in the classical music attendance of pre-boomers, 8.2 percent of the variance for baby boomers and just 4.9 percent of the variance for post-boomers. This means that the set of demographic variable was twice as successful in predicting attendance at classical music concerts for pre-boomers as for post-boomers.

Table 5.2.
Regression Results of Opera Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.052*	0.008	0.000
Female	0.093**	-0.002	0.006
Black	-0.012	-0.018	-0.045*
Not Married	0.047*	0.047**	0.025
Income	0.124**	0.020	-0.010
Education	0.080**	0.115**	0.076**
Father's Educ	0.067**	-0.001	0.064*
Children	-0.007	-0.022	0.008
Health	0.014	0.026	0.029
Metro	0.054*	0.039*	0.066**
Student		0.072*	
R-square	0.055	0.025	0.029

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Table 5.3.
Regression Results of Musical Theater Attendances on Age by Cohort (standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.044	0.035*	0.003
Female	0.114**	0.051**	0.057*
Black	-0.025	0.039*	-0.004
Not Married	0.012	0.050**	0.038
Income	0.122**	0.082**	0.046
Education	0.126**	0.161**	0.090**
Father's Educ	0.021	0.016	0.058*
Children	-0.016	-0.021	-0.053*
Health	0.095**	0.050**	-0.020
Metro	0.030	0.066**	-0.010
Student		0.032	
R-square	0.081	0.073	0.034

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Quickly inspecting the other seven tables, shows the same pattern, better prediction for the older age group and considerably attenuated prediction for younger respondents, with boomers intermediate, is found also for attendance at musicals, theater, art museums, and also for the summary arts measure. Like the forms discussed so far, opera attendance is best predicted for the older age group but the

prediction for the other two age groups is equally poor. The pattern is similar for ballet attendance but the degree of explanation is so low that it is not worth considering. Only in the case of jazz is the pattern reversed. Here the R-square for the pre-boomers is very low, but is somewhat higher for the other two age groups.

Table 5.4.
Regression Results of Jazz Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.007	-0.012	0.050
Female	-0.019	-0.011	-0.027
Black	0.037	0.075**	0.031
Not Married	0.012	0.102**	0.068**
Income	0.057*	0.058**	0.045
Education	0.081**	0.095**	0.084**
Father's Educ	-0.001	0.047**	0.035
Children	-0.003	-0.054**	-0.074**
Health	0.044	-0.004	-0.018
Metro	0.022	0.013	0.017
Student			0.067*
R-square	0.023	0.045	0.042

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Table 5.5.
Regression Results of Theater Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.007	-0.012	0.050
Age	0.079**	0.020	0.014
Female	0.060**	0.004	0.037
Black	0.005	-0.006	0.003
Not Married	0.033	0.071**	0.070**
Income	0.117**	0.032	-0.031
Education	0.185**	0.145**	0.057*
Father's Educ	-0.003	0.038*	0.094**
Children	0.005	-0.037*	-0.026
Health	0.044*	0.027	-0.035
Metro	0.048*	0.052**	0.015
Student			0.058
R-square	0.080	0.051	0.031

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Table 5.6.
Regression Results of Ballet Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.039	0.041*	-0.031
Female	0.060**	0.060**	0.002
Black	-0.020	-0.009	-0.023
Not Married	0.045*	0.040*	-0.012
Income	0.094**	0.029	0.012
Education	0.033	0.080**	0.052
Father's Educ	0.077**	0.047**	-0.008
Children	0.034	0.008	-0.028
Health	0.019	0.027	0.000
Metro	0.074**	0.052**	-0.023
Student			0.026
R-square	0.038	0.028	0.007

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Table 5.7.
Regression Results of Art Museum Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.003	0.030	-0.002
Female	0.095**	0.022	-0.009
Black	-0.023	0.004	-0.026
Not Married	0.057**	0.093**	0.090**
Income	0.150**	0.053**	-0.006
Education	0.194**	0.180**	0.168**
Father's Educ	0.074**	0.103**	0.062*
Children	-0.007	-0.037*	-0.027
Health	0.047*	0.009	0.022
Metro	0.070**	0.064**	0.094**
Student			0.037
R-square	0.142	0.096	0.073

See footnote on Table 5.1.

The difference in predictive power seen across all birth cohorts means that those interested in increasing arts participation cannot focus on the same set of variables across all age groups. In most art forms the usual list of predictors of arts attendance for the population born before World War II, variables including education,

income and gender, are no longer as important in determining attendance. The findings reported in Research Report #37 suggest that this difference is due in part to differences between cohorts and is not simply a function of the age of respondents. If Research #37 showed that baby boomers are different from the cohorts born before them, the findings reported here suggest that the post-boomer cohorts are different again.

THE RELATIVE CONTRIBUTION OF AGE AND THE CONTROL VARIABLES TO PARTICIPATION IN EACH BENCHMARK ART FORM

Here the predictors of arts attendance in each of the art forms are examined in turn. These results are found in Tables 5.1 through 5.7. As in Chapter 4, to facilitate comparisons, the focus here in Chapter 5 is on the Betas (standardized coefficients).

Classical Music Looking first at the Betas across the top line of Table 5.1, even after separating the whole sample into the three age groups (pre-boomers, boomers, and post-boomers), age is still an important predictor of classical music attendance for the older two groups. This means that even within these age groups, older pre-boomers and older boomers are more likely to attend than are their somewhat younger colleagues. Age is the third most important predictor for pre-boomers, and the second most important predictor among boomers.

Reflecting the findings of Chapter 4, the respondents' years of education is by far the most important predictor of classical music attendance. Among pre-boomers and boomers the importance of the respondents education and, independently, by their father's education as well. Among post-boomers education along with student status are the only two significant predictors of classical music attendance.

Household income is the second most important predictor for pre-boomers but falls to sixth most important for boomers. Only among pre-boomers are women more likely to attend classical music concerts than are men. Finally, being married, and metropolitan residence, are the only significant predictors of classical music attendance among boomers.

Opera Only among pre-boomers, as is seen in the Betas of Table 5.2, is age a significant predictor of opera attendance. Income is by far the best predictor among pre-boomers but is unimportant among the younger age groups.

Education is the most important predictor of boomer and post-boomer opera attendance. Metropolitan residence is the second most important predictor for post-boomers and is also a significant predictor among the older age groups. As with classical music, gender is important only for pre-boomers. Being married is a significant predictor of not attending the opera among pre-boomers and boomers, as is being black among post-baby boomers.

Musical Theater As seen in the Betas of Table 5.3, education is far and away the best predictor of musical theater attendance for all three age groups, and father's education is also important for post-boomers.

For pre-boomers and boomers, income is the second most important predictor of attending musicals but is not significantly important among post-boomers. Women of all ages are more likely to go to musicals than are men. Among baby boomers, blacks, and those living in metropolitan areas are more likely to attend musicals than are whites and those living outside the metropolitan areas.

Jazz The Betas in Table 5.4 show that among pre-boomers, few of whom attend jazz concerts, higher education and income are the only significant predictors of attending jazz concerts. Education is of prime importance among boomers and post-boomers as well.

For boomers and post-boomers, both being married and having young children in the home significantly reduce jazz attendance. Finally, the respondents being black is significantly correlated with jazz attendance, but only among baby boomers.

Theater Education is the most important predictor of theater attendance for pre-boomers and boomers alike as shown by the Betas. But beyond this point the predictors of theater attendance are quite different across birth cohort groups. Among pre-boomers, family income, age, and gender follow in importance. In contrast, not being married and living in a metropolitan area are the second and third most important predictors for boomers.

Among post-boomers, education is the all-important predictor, but interestingly, the best single predictor is father's education, followed by student status and respondents education. The only other significant predictor of theater attendance among post-boomers is not being married.

Ballet In contrast to the art forms discussed so far, income is the best predictor of ballet attendance among pre-boomers, as can be seen by the relevant Betas in Table

5.6. Curiously, father’s education is the second best predictor and the respondent’s education is not a significant predictor. Being female is an important predictor, and it may well be that many of these older female ballet fans born before the Second World War came from well educated families but, because of their gender, did not so often have educational opportunities themselves. Living in a metropolitan area and not currently being married are the two other variables important in predicting ballet attendance among pre-boomers.

Father’s education is still important for baby boomers but respondent’s education is the most important predictor followed by being female and living in a metropolitan area. Unlike several of the other art forms already examined, having children does not depress boomer attendance. This may be because many young people, especially girls, are regularly taken to ballet performances.

The results for post-boomers are strikingly different, because none of the measured variables contribute significantly to ballet attendance.

Art Museum As Table 5.7 shows, the predictors of art museum attendance are roughly the same across all three age groups. These include both respondent’s and father’s education, being unmarried, and metropolitan area residence. In addition to these four, household income is important for boomers and pre-boomers, gender and health are important just for pre-boomers, and having children in the home is important just for boomers.

Summary Arts Participation Recall that summary arts participation measures the number of benchmark forms that the respondent has participated in during the prior year. The results for the summary arts participation measure shown in Table 5.8. Considerably more variables prove to be significant predictors than seen in the earlier tables for each of the art forms alone. This is not surprising because the range of this measure is from 0 to 7 while the range of all of the single discipline measures is 0 and 1. Respondent’s education, household income, gender, father’s education, and metropolitan residence are all significant for all three age groups.

Redolent of the findings for several of the individual art forms, age is a significant predictor of attendance for pre-boomers and boomers but not for post-boomers. Finally, reflecting stage-of-life exigencies, health is a predictor of summary arts participation for pre-boomers and boomers; children in the home are significant for boomers and post-boomers, and student status is important for post-boomers.

Table 5.8.
Regression Results of Summary Arts Attendances on Age by Cohort
(standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.057**	0.054**	0.019
Female	0.145**	0.092**	0.049*
Black	0.018	0.024	0.014
Not Married	0.043*	0.096**	0.107**
Income	0.208**	0.163**	0.057**
Education	0.308**	0.311**	0.273**
Father's Educ	0.063**	0.082**	0.137**
Children	-0.011	-0.035*	-0.060**
Health	0.101**	0.043**	0.022
Metro	0.054**	0.063**	0.051*
Student			0.152**
R-square	0.273	0.246	0.217

See footnote on Table 5.1.

Table 5.9.
Regression Results of Summary Arts Attendances (without Jazz) on
Age by Cohort (standardized coefficients)

	Pre-Boomers	Boomers	Post-Boomers
Age	0.066**	0.060**	0.007
Female	0.154**	0.107**	0.059**
Black	0.007	0.005	-0.008
Not Married	0.040*	0.074**	0.095**
Income	0.203**	0.153**	0.054*
Education	0.305**	0.318**	0.268**
Father's Educ	0.059**	0.077**	0.138**
Children	-0.010	-0.029	-0.049*
Health	-0.103**	-0.047**	-0.024
Metro	0.061**	0.067**	0.053*
Student			0.141**
R-square	0.268	0.245	0.204

See footnote on Table 5.1.

THE RELATIVE IMPORTANCE OF AGE AND INDIVIDUAL CONTROL VARIABLES IN PREDICTING PARTICIPATION ACROSS THE BENCHMARK ARTS

Looking again at Tables 5.1 through 5.7, now the focus is on the predictive importance of each variable in turn across all seven forms. Before examining the individual variables, however, it is worthwhile noting the consistency in the results across the tables. Among the 217 coefficients,²⁰ across all seven art forms the sign of significant relationships is consistent with one single exception.²¹ This consistency attests the reliability of the measures in predicting arts attendance. Thus, variability across tables has to do with differences in the strength of the predictive value of variables by art form and by age, but they do not show any difference in the directions of predictions.

Turning now to the individual variables, we see that having divided the sample into three parts by age, the predictive power of age has been attenuated, but not completely. Older pre-boomers and baby boomers are still more likely to attend several of the art forms than are the younger members of their cohorts.

The importance of education for socialization to arts participation is very apparent in the figures in Tables 5.1–5.7. Among pre-boomers, the **respondent's education** is the most important predictor of arts participation for all forms except ballet. It is the most important among boomers for all the arts, and among post-boomers for five of the forms. Likewise, **father's education** is also independently important in four arts forms for each of the age groups, and finally, **student status** is important among post-boomers.

Household income is a significant predictor for all seven of the art forms among pre-boomers, and it is also important for four of the seven among baby boomers. Yet it is without significance for post-boomers. It may be that differences in wealth are becoming less important over these birth cohorts. It may also be that the variable “household income” is a poor measure among young adults in any time period because the current income of those who went on the job market early, and rarely attend arts events, is still as high as that for those who spend many more years in formal schooling and are more likely to attend. The importance of education, father's education, and student status gives credibility to this latter life-cycle interpretation.

The two ascribed status variables, race and gender, show contrasting results. Controlling for the other measured factors, Black respondents generally show the same pattern of arts attendance as do non-Blacks. Only in the case of jazz attendance among baby boomers, are Black rates higher than for the rest, and only for post-boomers is attendance at opera lower than for non-Blacks.

The results for gender show a pattern that is clearly consistent with changes between cohorts. Controlling for the other factors, pre-boomer women are more likely to attend every art form more often than are men except jazz. Among baby boomers, women are more likely to attend only two forms, musicals and ballet, and among post-boomers the attendance rates for women and men are virtually the same for every form except musicals, which women attend more often than men.

Four of the variables measure the effects of exigencies that affect arts participation. The first is **marital status**. Those not married that is to say the never married, the divorced, and the separated—show higher rates of arts participation in four art forms among pre-boomers, in all seven among boomers, and in three forms among post-boomers as compared with those who are married or widowed. These findings suggest that those married persons who have available companionship and those who are involuntarily alone, are less likely to seek out the arts than are those who are unmarried or otherwise voluntarily living alone.

Large cities provide more arts participation opportunities than do smaller cities and towns, so it is reasonable to expect that **metropolitan place of residence** should equally influence all age groups. Metropolitan residence is important for participation in four of the arts forms for pre-boomers, and six forms for baby boomers. But among post-boomers, it is important for only two art forms, opera and museum attendance. It may be that due to wider travel, more education, and greater exposure to the arts via the media, metropolitan residence is becoming less important. If this is the case, this is a clear cohort effect. It may also be that more of the well-educated and arts-oriented younger people living outside metropolitan areas are located in college towns and other high-technology towns.

Finally, the participation of two variables, children in the household and health, should be correlated with their stage of life, and, indeed, that is seen in the data. **Presence of children in the home** is an irrelevant consideration among most of the older pre-boomers, but significantly depresses participation in several art forms for boomers and post-boomers cohorts, many of whose members were in 1997 in the midst of child raising. In parallel but opposite direction, **health** is irrelevant for post-boomers, is somewhat important for boomers and is even more important for the more elderly pre-boomers. These patterns are reflected exactly in the summary arts participation shown in Table 5.8. The presence of children in the home is important only among the two younger cohorts and (poor) health is important only among the two older cohorts. Thus the findings for these two variables reflect changes associated with life-stages.

NOTES

¹ As a measure of “average age” we use the “median.” The median value of a set of measures means that half the individuals in the sample are older and half are younger than the median age. Another way to measure “average age” is to use the mean values. The mean takes into account the distance of all the individual ages from the mean. The expected mean age for 1982 is 43.1 years, for 1992 45.4, and for 1997 46.1. These mean ages are three and a fraction years older than their corresponding medians for each of the survey years reported in Table 1.1 because those below the mean cannot be younger than 18 while those above the mean can be in their 80s or older. Therefore, we find it more appropriate to use the median as the measure of central tendency, of “average.”

² SPPA respondents are older on average than the United States civilian population because only those 18 years of age or older were sampled (NEA 1998a).

³ It is worth noting that in all cases the ages of art-form audiences in 1992 is between, or equal to, those for 1982 and 1997, giving support to the assertion that the comparison of proportions method used here makes the 1997 figures comparable with those of earlier survey years.

⁴ It is also worth noting at the outset that those in the sample who are 60 and over have gone from 21.2 percent in 1982 to 23.1 percent in 1997 of survey respondents. This is an increase of just under two percent, but as we will see in Chapter 2, the proportion of these elders in arts audiences has risen considerably more.

⁵ They have, for example, linked age with the changing size of the audience and the influence of age relative to other factors on the rate of audience attendance over time.

⁶ A calculation was made of the relative percentage that each age group and birth cohort represented in the total number of “attendances” (the number of times each respondent attended the art form) in each sample. A variable in each data set represented the number of times the respondent attended that benchmark art in the last twelve months (with the exception of 1982, in which the question covered only the last month. This value was assumed to represent an “average” month and was multiplied by twelve to reflect the number of attendances in a year).

⁷ Figures for attendees under twenty years of age are shown in all the tables in this Chapter, but they will not be discussed here because the numbers are based just on those respondents 18 and 19 years of age while all the other age groups (except for the eldest) span ten years.

⁸ These figures are reached by adding 8.5 and 7.1 percent = 15.6 percent and 14.4 and 15.7 percent = 30.1 percent. The computations for other combined age groups will be made in the same fashion without note.

⁹ If you wish to reconstruct a table of the proportion of the audience of any particular age for any of the art forms who are attendees, simply subtract, if positive, or add, if negative, the appropriate number in the difference tables (Tables 2.8–2.14) from the corresponding cell in the attendance tables (Tables 2.1–2.7). Thus, for example, to find the proportion of the symphony orchestra audience that were teens in 1982 subtract 1.0 (found in the upper left-hand cell of Table 2.1) from 5.4 (found in the upper left-hand cell of Table 2.8). The resulting 4.4 is the proportion of all classical music attendees in 1982 who were teens.

¹⁰ The relative percentage that each birth cohort contributed to the total number of “attendances” (the number of times one attended a benchmark art) in each benchmark art form for each year were calculated. A variable in each 1992 and 1997 data set represents the number of times the respondent attended that particular benchmark art in the last twelve months. In 1982, the question covered only the last month, so this value was assumed to represent an “average” month and was multiplied by twelve to reflect the attendances in a year. To calculate the attendance figures shown in Tables 3.1 through 3.7 cross-tab frequencies of the cohort by the number of attendances were made in order to know how many respondents in each cohort attended that benchmark art form every possible number of times. Using the example of jazz attendance mentioned in Note 2 of Chapter 2, in 1997 the 20–29 age group, 95 respondents attended jazz one time, 75 attended two times, 48 attended three times, etc., up to a maximum possible value of 72 times in one year. Next, each value in the frequency cell was multiplied by corresponding the number of attendances for each cohort (in the same example, 95 times 1, 75 times 2, 48 times 3, etc.). Then these products were summed for each cohort to represent the total number of times that respondents in this cohort attended that benchmark art in the previous year (e.g., the 20–29 year old respondents attended jazz a total of 1,084 times in 1997). Finally, the sum for each age group or cohort was divided by the summed total of every age group or cohorts’ attendances (the global number of attendances by all respondents in that year) to reflect the proportion of attendances reported by each cohort in relation to the others within each sample year (e.g., the 1,084 total for the 20–29 group was divided by the grand total of 5,123 attendances for the whole sample in 1997, showing that 21 percent of total attendances at jazz concerts were 20 to 29 years old).

¹¹ Unlike the other decade-long cohorts, this one includes cohorts, this one include just those born over a five-year period. This is because in the survey year,

1997, those born in 1981–1985 were under 18 years of age and thus were too young to be part of the SPPA survey sample.

¹² The observed participation for each cohort is found in the appropriate Table from 3.1 to 3.7. The expected participation for each cohort is expected in the appropriate row of Table 1.2. The difference figures in parentheses are obtained by subtracting the expected participation from the observed participation.

¹³ In this instance, the obtained percent is 5.2 and the expected percentage is 4.5, and since the observed is larger than the expected, the sign of the figure is positive.

¹⁴ The data for 1992 are available, but they are not explicitly examined here. The 1992 values are intermediate between those of 1982 and 1997 in 20 of the 42 possible comparisons (six cohorts x seven art forms). And in most of the rest of the cases where a figure for 1992 was not intermediate, it was roughly equal to that of 1982 or 1997. The only notable exceptions are the audiences for theater and for musical theater. The 1992 audience for theater tended to be older, and the audience for musical theater tended to be younger, in 1992 than in the survey years before and after 1992. These variations from the norm probably have to do with changes, beyond the scope of this monograph, taking place in these art forms during the early 1990s.

¹⁵ To be sure, that report found that the participation rate of these earlier boomers was low compared to earlier cohorts after their relatively high education, income, and other factors were taken into account. That is to say, their participation rate was low given their relatively advantaged status.

¹⁶ Scores in Tables 3.8–3.15 reflect the proportion of attendance minus the proportion of attendees.

¹⁷ If you wish to construct a table of the proportion of the audience of any particular age for any of the art forms who are attendees, simply subtract, if positive, or add, if negative, the appropriate number in the difference tables (Tables 2.8–2.14) from the corresponding cell in the attendance tables (Tables 2.1–2.7). Thus, for example, To find the proportion of the symphony orchestra audience that were teens in 1982 subtract 1.0 (found in the upper left-hand cell of Table 2.1) from 5.4 (found in the upper left-hand cell of Table 2.8). The resulting 4.4 is the proportion of all classical music attendees in 1982 who were teens.

¹⁸ The earliest cohort, the one including all those born before 1916 will not be considered here because, while its participants tend to attend less often than average, its rates of participation do not show any coherent pattern across all the art forms.

¹⁹ We chose to use simple OLS regression with the dichotomous dependent variable “attendee” rather than logistic regression in order to facilitate interpretation

of the results and simplify comparisons across all three sets of models. For a justification of this choice see Davis (1994). Davis, James A. 1994 "What's Wrong with Sociology?" *Sociological Forum* 9: 179-197.

²⁰ This number of measures is obtained by recognizing that for each of the seven art forms there are ten variables for each of the three age groups and there is an additional variable (student status) for post-boomers. This means $(7 \times 10 \times 3) + 7 = 217$ measures.

²¹ The single reversal in this finding is that opera-going among black post-boomer respondents is significantly lower than expected by chance.

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